

A PROCESS FOR BECOMING
THE PEOPLE OF GOD BY
MAKING WORSHIP THE WORKS
OF THE PEOPLE.

A professional project
submitted to the faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont
in partial fulfillment for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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May, 1979

This professional project, completed by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

For as long as I can remember I have believed that corporate worship is the single most important event in the life of the church. To communicate that significance and translate my belief to a congregation in some life-giving, changing and sustaining way has been my goal. How to make corporate worship the single most important event in the life of the church, without rehearsing traditional styles of worship or reducing worship to an exercise in the most recent fad, has been the task.

What the church and I have done, in a variety of ways, is engage a processive understanding of worship in which we struggle to discern and discover together what the appropriate forms and elements of worship are, which both reflect our pilgrimage and enable our life together as well as the ministry of our church.

The struggle has been facilitated by the small group process; engagement of the laity in the entire process of worship, not simply participation in the Sunday morning worship event; opportunities for the congregation to "feed-back" their reactions and responses to the worship experience; Bible Study; experimenting with various styles of worship; working through the Boards and Committees of the Church; one-to-one exchanges and discussion with me - the pastor.

The results have been positive and responses to worship are affirmative. Not all the results we sought to realize have been achieved. However, most of the time most of the congregation is engaged, one way or another, in the process. Attendance has improved. We have

moved to two services of worship and introduced Bible Study for adults between the two services. Greater opportunities for pastoral care have grown out of the worship experience. Most of the people feel worship is the touchstone for our life together - that all things proceed from worship and that what grows out of worship is also gathered up in worship. This experience and this project have brought new vitality to our church and new enthusiasm for corporate worship.

Accordingly, the title of this project is:

A PROCESS FOR BECOMING
 THE PEOPLE OF GOD BY
 MAKING WORSHIP THE WOPKS
 OF THE PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

FOREWORD

ONE LATE BUTTERFLY
WANDERING THROUGH THE TWILIGHT
..... LOOKING FOR HER HOME.

For as long as I can remember I have wanted to become a Pastor. I do not know why it is that some of us are called to strange adventures. I understand even less why some of us, in the face of such great obstacles, respond to those callings.

The first time I said out loud "I want to be a Minister" was when I was 5. That was in 1940. The Ministry was not one of the careers encouraged for female children at the time (and I am not persuaded that all that has happened in the interim has increased the encouragement).

Cultural norms notwithstanding, the church my family attended boasted two Ministers, a male and a female - husband and wife to be sure - who shared the responsibilities of the church. Of course, he did the preaching and administering and she the directing of the Church School and leading of Junior Church. Regardless of how they divided their work, the point is that my first memorable encounter with a female other than my mother was with a woman in a position of leadership and authority who had been theologically trained and who related to me in a way which honored my fantasies and cherished my dreams.

She neither depreciated my ambition nor attempted to discourage me by suggesting other, more appropriate (female) pursuits or lines of

endeavour. In fact she would even state, on occasion, that what she was doing I could do and that I could become whatever I wanted to become. Accordingly, the church became for me the giver and encourager of dreams and visions. I received much encouragement there, "strokes" as we say today. And when I was there I felt safe, protected, sure and therefore good about myself.

Additionally, the Services of Worship, both in the "big church" and in junior church were genuine "highs." We (the children) were almost always included in some way and were not simply the passive recipients of a "children's sermon." I remember vividly the first time I was asked to "go up on the chancel" and share with the Minister about some special mission project the church school was sponsoring. I looked forward to that event for days and lingered on the experience for many months thereafter. The sense of excitement and significance that worship and being included in church generated within me was intense and lasting. The feeling of belonging, and of belonging to something I would never exhaust, has stayed with me through all time and all places even when the time and place did not communicate that sense.

When I was 10 we moved and left Oak Park Baptist Church for Cedar Rapids Methodist. After that there was Michigan Lutheran, Ohio Presbyterian and a variety of towns, accompanied by a variety of church experiences. Although all the experiences had some merit, I never again felt what I had felt during those earliest encounters with the church. Even attending a church-related University (Denison) did not provide the longed-for sense of belonging to Christ's body -

at least as I remembered it. Seminary, though intellectually stimulating and satisfying, still left my soul with a sense of "something missing." Other concerns and causes became Church.

All my adult experiences in church were important, in that simply going through the motions of "being there" kept hope alive and the vision of what church could be a remembered possibility. Yet most of what I encountered on Sunday morning was so ordinary, so uninspired, so unimaginative, that I found myself - most Sundays - leaving church with that kind of anger which is occasioned by frustration and disappointment, hardly a recommendation for returning. And so, for six years, I did not return, being content instead to "wander in the wilderness," always looking and never finding.

The Civil Rights movement and the Anti-Vietnam War protests provided occasions of profound commitment and togetherness among those of us who struggled together in the cause. Still the sense of belonging borne of shared history and continuity was largely absent.

The Human Potential Movement and all the budding therapies opened new areas of selfhood, which wanted to be addressed by me, yet all the stimulation of self-discovery was not sufficient to answer my deep yearning to grow up - but within a context, with a horizon more vast than my own and purpose more sustaining than my personal needs.

It is amazing to me how intense and profound those earliest experiences in the church must have been in order to sustain and encourage the dream through all those intervening years. Throughout my quest I also maintained a promise to God and myself, namely, that if I ever did have an opportunity to be Pastor of a church I would do

all that I could, and was called to do, to create for people an experience of church as I remembered it, to the end that the church would become for people the householder of dreams and visions, the provider of context and continuity and the transmitter of meaning and purpose. The dreams, visions, context, continuity, meaning and purpose become persuasive, life-changing forces when they derive their power from God and God's Christ. That agent which exists in the world to make that power evident and to translate that power into lived-out reality in Christ's body, is the Church. The occasion which holds within it the greatest possibility of that power being experienced in a first-hand way is that public occasion which occurs at regular intervals within the life of the body, namely WORSHIP.

It is the purpose of this report to share with you what we in the Church of the Oaks have done and are doing to ensure that the worshiping experience is, more often than not, for most people that occasion, that moment, when God's power and the power of God's Christ infuses our lives with power and makes Church - the body - happen. It is my sense that the extent to which we can accomplish that possibility will provide other butterflies with warmth enough to encourage the shedding of cocoons and light enough to show the way back home.

CHAPTER II

PROLOGUE

ONE SMALL BUTTERFLY
FLYING THROUGH THE WINTER AIR
.... LOOKING FOR SPRINGTIME

I am the Pastor of a small (300 members), suburban, mainline Protestant Church. Our members are, for the most part, affluent, upwardly mobile, moderate to conservative and white. Most of our members are in the 30-55 age bracket. We have a significant number of retired members and teenagers. By and large our membership reflects one of three reasons for aligning with our church: Church is a good thing, they have always belonged to and attended church; it is simply a part of life and, as long as the Pastor fulfills her pastoral responsibilities, they will support and remain loyal to the church. This group likes things done in a more traditional style and does not respond enthusiastically to innovation. But they do not quit the church.

The second reason for joining our church has to do with our church specifically. They perceive that our church is a church committed to spiritual growth within the context of a contemporary interpretation of the Gospel expressed in worship and programs commensurate with today's needs. They are open, flexible, experimental and enthusiastic with regard to innovation. They do not quit the church.

Then there is that larger group of people who come looking for something, remembering the value of church from an earlier time in their lives and even having recently belonged to a church in another

part of the country. Church did not really "do" all that much for them "before" but they are looking. They usually want "something" for themselves which is relevant to their lives but garbed in traditional dress. They accept innovation if it meets their needs and respond to programatic creativity as long as it does not discomfort them or ask them to change. They are committed neither to the traditional value of loyalty not to the contemporary need for growth. They do quit the church.

So the Church Council, our Boards and I struggle. We struggle constantly to remain faithful to the vision of, and for, our church as it unfolds. We struggle to find ways to translate the Gospel in meaningful and imaginative ways which compromise neither it nor us. And we struggle to understand what it means to be a church which, because of its vision and style, will probably always be small, with people always coming and going and us always starting over. In our church we also struggle in intentional ways to make congregationalism a lived-out reality. We do that not only because our polity so directs but also because we are convinced that including people in the process and including them in the acting-out of their faith invests them in their church and develops a capacity for loyalty which is neither simply a good works value nor a should/ought attitude. Getting people to "buy in", as it were, is fundamental to all that we attempt to do and that becomes increasingly important as we assess our ministry within our community and begin to appropriate some of the unique opportunities which are ours.

In an article entitled "From Guilt to Affirmation in the Mainline

Churches," Dr. Norman Potts observes:

.... now that we have learned that the medium is the message - a temptation is to make our appeal slick, glamorous and attractively packaged. This approach has application to all the communication that occurs in the church but particularly to its public displays: Music, preaching, the performance of liturgy. To keep the people in the posture of spectators, while at the same time affording them the vicarious experience of participation via professionals, enables the church to reap the benefit of one of the most powerful dynamics of our time. The Gospel, however, describes the Christian community as a gathering of persons, each one of whom is particularly gifted by the grace of God, and it defines the church as the place where these individual gifts are to be discovered and expressed. This understanding militates against an attitude of professionalism and commits the church to an ongoing volunteerism and a permanent amateur standing - hardly the ingredients for a slick operation.¹

The article I have quoted attempts to assuage the anxiety experienced by many Pastors in mainline (suburban) churches when we fall victim to the comparison syndrome and the "numbers game." If we compare what is happening in our churches to what was happening during the "back to God" boom of the 50's; to what is going on within charismatic, pentecostal and fundamental circles; or to the success of slickly-packaged and well-marketed churches; we are doomed to frustration, discouragement and even guilt. Dr. Potts sees in the church-member and dollar depression an opportunity for developing genuine Christian life-styles and for building communities in which persons are born again - and again, and again, through the renewing and enabling power of the Gospel. The kind of possibilities to which he points do not happen often or easily within massive congregations whose primary concerns are with expansion and building.

¹Norman D. Potts, "From Guilt to Affirmation in the Mainline Churches," Christian Century, XCVI, 3 (January 24, 1979), 76f.

Our church, like so many others, does have unique opportunities to develop enabling styles of Christian intimacy and empowering modes of spiritual awareness which foster both intra-dependence (self-sufficiency within the context of the community) and extra-dependence (looking beyond oneself to the community for support). The beginning point, the touch-stone and the returning point for that kind of possibility is corporate worship.

From one point of view, the Anglo-Saxon root of "worship," the word weorthscipe (worthship), points to the notion of homage, an attitude and activity designed to describe the worth of the person or thing to which the homage is addressed. Accordingly, at one level at least, the worship experience needs to be an event in which it is evident that God is unqualifiedly worthy as the focus of worship.

Left there, however, worship can be wholly individual and private. Both the Old and the New Testaments seem quite clear that, although God can and should be worshiped individually and privately, the God we worship is not simply the God of an individual but also the God of individuals gathered together to form a group with a common focus, concern and commitment. The persuasive power and directing purposes of God are experienced more immediately and intensely within the context of the gathered group. Therefore, another purpose of worship is to gather the people for whom God is the focus of the homage in order to experience not only our worship but also God's response.

For far too long in our church, and I suspect in other churches as well, the idea of worship had been that it was simply a routine or act designed to give God what was due HIM because HE is God. Once

done, people could then return home and to their lives with little of lingering import, save for an occasional well-turned phrase on the part of the Preacher or a well-performed Anthem on the part of the Chancel Choir. The testimony of Scripture is that what empowers and enables lives is not what we do but what God has done and is doing. Worship then must be an occasion for remembering and reflecting on what God has done and an opportunity to experience, in a first-hand way, what God is still doing.

Worship must also be the occasion for participation:

The word participation is meant to convey that usmological visida which sees the interdependence and interpenetration of all things and their mutual relationship as the deepest web of reality we are inasmuch as we participate in the whole and allow the whole to participate in us The person does not have an existence of his or her own, he or she is insofar as he or she participates.²

The secularizing process and the reality of pluralism make it essential for the church, especially in its worshiping life, to demonstrate and reveal to people their interconnections and interrelationships to one another and all things. To fail to do this is for people to retreat into privatized expressions of the faith because they are simply overwhelmed by "all that out there." The consequence of those fears is to draw absolute lines of separation between what is thought to be secular, i.e. the world and the sacred, i.e. the church. In that neatly compartmentalized place it becomes almost impossible for people to see wherein they are their brothers' and sisters' keepers,

²Raimundo Panikar, Worship and Secular Man (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), p. 47.

and what exactly the relevance of whales and seal pups, trees and hills, is to anything.

Worship here means the art by which we express in one way or another the fulness of the human person ... it implies the integration of transtemporal reality and tempieternity as a fundamental dimension of the real. Worship is Theandric, it implies an insight into the whole ... worship requires a participation in the cosmic process of the world, a share in the totalizing dynamism of reality, and, in consequence, an overcoming of individualism not only among people but also among things and, in a very special way, in God himself/herself.³

It is no longer sufficient for people to worship with the attitude that something is going to be done for them, or to them, by someone else - a something which can be tuned out and discounted if it does not fit their needs, or affirmed and complimented if it does do something for and to them. Worship must reveal to people the participatory reality it is and design itself in such ways as to open people to richer understandings of what it means to be fully human. "We are not dealing with a merely pastoral problem of how best to adapt old "stuff" to the new generation: we are rather struggling with the problem of human self-understanding at its deepest level."⁴

If we can create worship experiences which fire persons to envision some of the unique opportunities for intimacy which are ours; if we can transmit to persons through worship that it is about God and us and God's responses as well as ours; if we can awaken persons to the participatory necessity worship must become and do all that with vitality, creativity, enthusiasm, inspiration, integrity, love and

³Ibid, p. 48f.

⁴Ibid, p. 70.

devotion, we will have succeeded in making worship the single most important event in the life of the church and will also have made worship true liturgy - the works of the people. That is what this project is about and it is to that end that this project is directed.

CHAPTER III.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON WORSHIP

SUMMER BUTTERFLY
OPENING HIS GOLDEN WINGS
... REVEALS THE SUNRISE!

Corporate worship is the single most important event in the life of the church. The plethora of books, pamphlets, articles, manuals, workshops, conferences, study groups, et al. currently devoted to worship point up both the central significance of worship and the long ignored reality of that fact. Not a week goes by that a succession of invitations to occasions designed to experience new forms of worship or to put new life and meaning in (Sunday) worship does not cross my desk.

Whereas Vatican II and similar Protestant convocations are events of the past, the effects of their focus on liturgy and worship continue to be felt. The period of intense experimentation with worship - folk Masses, dialogue sermons, guitar and tamborine music, poetry readings - has given birth to general confusion with regard to what worship is and what the true worship experience is all about. It is an axiom that change for the sake of change is superficial and tradition for the sake of tradition is deadly. Much of the experimenting has been no more enriching to the life of the worshipper and the church than had been the role rehearsals of traditional forms of worship. In the extreme, both reduce worship to production and performance, turning the worshipper into a consumer.

Both styles, the wholly experimental or the wholly traditional,

have the same basic effect on the worshipper - paralysis. That paralysis develops as a result of being afraid on the one hand, a fear born of not knowing what is expected; or, on the other hand, boredom, born of knowing too well what is expected. If worship is designed to do anything, surely it is not to paralyze. It is my sense that, in our church at least, we are entering into a period of transitional convergence. We have, during the 70's, been in a period of transitional reaction to the challenges mounted against traditional forms, structures, values and institutions during the 60's.

During the 60's it became clear that the old was no longer efficacious in our attempts to relate to and appropriate the pluralism of contemporary existence. The old was dead but the new had not yet emerged. We had become modern Isaacs, inheritors of the promise but distinguished only by the charge to keep the promise alive and pass it on. The vehicle, the medium, the style for that transfer was not clear. Consequently, in mainline churches the order of the day became analysis and diagnosis - trying to figure out where the church was and where it was going and why. Systems analysis, marketing research, media value, program packaging, became concerns of the church, vividly reflected in an endless succession of "contemporary styles of worship." Even the Evangelicals got into the act. "Praise Jesus" and "Amen, sister" began to be heard, even in Cedar Rapids Methodist and Akron Presbyterian. Charismatics and Pentecostals invaded the Roman Catholic and Episcopal Liturgy.

In other quarters, where the liturgical explosion was viewed as the work of the devil, the attempt to burrow more deeply into the

protective womb of tradition comforted the congregants at the expense of turning off young people and circumventing the creative new forms which were taking shape.

If nothing else, the period through which we have most recently come has been successful in generating enough confusion to necessitate a kind of pulling together of the pieces - the best pieces from our tradition and the best pieces of what we have newly discovered. Hopefully, in the convergence of the best from both experiences, we can create a new transitional period in which the church's focus is removed from itself and returned to the Christ and the world the Christ seeks to transform. To begin the converging process requires developing a theology of worship which derives its impetus from what has been learned from the past and its inspiration from what is being experienced now. The impetus from the past is the historical witness to the faith that proclaims that Jesus Christ is Lord. The testimony of the faith is that in Jesus of Nazareth the Christ of God has incarnated into human affairs and "the principle of creative transformation has been unleashed in a unique and definitive way."¹

The inspiration inherent in the contemporary experience is the realization that the historical witness becomes a life-empowering and life-changing happening - a fact now, in the midst of the very community charged to preserve that witness when it opens itself to the new thing God is doing now. The first ingredient in a theology of worship must

¹John B. Cobb, Jr., Christ in a Pluralistic Age (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 76f.

be, therefore, dialogue, not between co-pastors or pastor and congregation or whomever, but between past and present. The elements of prayer, scripture, proclamation and sacrament, are preserved while, at the same time, given new forms, language, content and even placement, within the service itself. For instance, it is conceivable to me that placing the sermon first in the service of worship could do more to enliven worship and awaken the worshipper to all the elements of worship than does the usual format which has everything culminating in the proclamation. That format it seems to me is increasingly unsatisfactory when we consider the world to which most worshippers return after that culminating moment. Soccer games, televised sports events, bar-b-q's with neighbors who have not shared the same or any worship experience. Freeway travel and the like are hardly activities conducive to reflection and reception. For the dialogue between past and present to happen requires that the worship service itself provide for that dialogue.

Worship brings together more than past and present. Worship brings together worshippers. In an era which has come to accept and even celebrate alienation as a fact of the human predicament, it is more important than ever to enable one worshipper to turn to another.

"I am as I am in relation."² "The minimal definition of our humanity, of humanity generally, must be that it is the being of persons in encounter, and in this sense the determination of a person

²Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (Edinburgh: Clark, 1960), IV/I, 244.

as a being with the other person."³ "Being means encounter. Hence being with the other person means encounter with that person. Hence humanity is the determination of our being as a being in encounter with the other person."⁴ "The 'I am' and the 'Thou Art' encounter each other as two histories. To see the other thus means directly to let oneself be seen by the other."⁵

Those words from Barth, now over 30 years old, sound marvelously contemporary, not unlike what gets said in encounter groups whose birth-place was the Human Potential Movement, rather than a study in Basel. It is always heartening to me to discover areas in which theological insight has preceded secular articulations. So much of society seems to accept readily and with authority pronouncements coming from the behavioural sciences relative to relationships, encounter and what it means to be truly human. Insights and understandings to which theologians have addressed themselves for centuries now find currency and acceptance in areas other than the Church. It is as if persons are hearing about the nature of humankind and the central significance of relationship for the first time. My hunch is that the reason for that has to do with the fact that what the Church has articulated as its concerns and what it has communicated as its policy have been two different realities.

³Ibid., III/2, 247, Section 45, Part 2.

⁴Ibid., III/2, 248.

⁵Ibid.

I remember reading somewhere that 11:00 on Sunday morning is the loneliest hour in the week. I also remember thinking "that's true". The Church has stood for community and rendered persons anonymous and empty at the same time. The Church has preached love while inculcating in its structures, especially as pertaining to worship, indifference about how, or whether, the persons lined up in those pews ever related to one another in any but the most formal manner.

Today, any theology of worship must address itself to the fact that worship is the Christian's opportunity to experience his/her humanity in fullest measure as it expresses itself in worshipful relationship with others. The worship experience then must become a moment which attempts in intentional ways to encourage worshippers to converge with one another.

For example, Barth understood quite well that we are in encounter with one another and that it is in our encounter with one another that our humanity is most fully expressed. Barth elaborates four signs of our being in encounter with one another:

- (1) Looking at the other and letting the other look at us;
- (2) Mutual speech and hearing;
- (3) Mutual assistance in the art of being - which includes receiving help as well as giving help;
- (4) What we do as humans is done on both sides with gladness.⁶

These four signs of being in encounter constitute for Barth the basic form of humanity. In his theological anthropology Barth insists that Jesus is "real man" and therefore "what man is is decided by the

⁶John C. Bennett, "A Non-Barthian's Gratitude to Karl Barth," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XXVIII, 1 (Fall 1972), 103.

primary text, i.e. by the humanity of the man Jesus."⁷ Jesus is not only man for God but also man for other men. Therefore, the worship experience must point to Jesus as a real person and provide opportunity for the discovery and expression of the worshipper's real humanity.

For Barth that discovery of realization comes in stages. The "I - Thou" encounter serves as the underpinning for these stages. "I pronounce the word and, in so doing, even if I only do so mentally or to myself, I make a distinction and a connection."⁸ "I" has no meaning without a reference point, something or someone against which it is making the distinction "I." That reference point is "Thou" and as soon as I say "Thou" I have made a connection. Without "Thou" there cannot be "I", or distinction, and without "I" "Thou" becomes meaningless because there is nothing to which it is connected.

The "I - Thou" encounter is experienced, according to Barth:

When one man looks the other in the eye ... (and) lets the other look him in the eye ... the encounter becomes the event of speech ... reciprocal expression and reciprocal reception, reciprocal address and reciprocal reception; ... we render mutual assistance in the act of being ... There is a being for one another ... and human being is not human if it does not include this being for one another; ... all the occurrences ... so far described as the basic form of humanity stands under the sign that it is done on both sides with gladness.⁹

The worship experience must reveal to the worshipper the unmistakable fact that we are as we are in encounter. Barth provides us with four basic stages in the development of that awareness. If

⁷Barth, III/2, 226.

⁸Ibid., III/2, 244.

⁹Ibid., III/2. 250, 252-253, 260, 265.

the worship event is to become the single most important event in the life of the church, those stages need to be addressed homiletically and even more important, engaged experientially.

Therefore, a theology of worship for today which will, in turn, inspire and inform the worship experience will need to encourage attempts to provide the worshipper with opportunities for looking at and being seen, speaking to the other and hearing the other, rendering mutual assistance and doing mutually with joy. Although John Bennett understands these signs as aspects of Barth's Christian humanism apart from Barth's Christocentric view of humankind, I do not. What gives these signs compelling significance and persuasive power in the life of each human is the fact that Jesus was/is the true human and these signs were/are characteristic of him in his relationship to God and to other human beings.

Barth asserts:

entering into this relationship (God in Jesus Christ), God makes a copy of Godself. Even in God's inner divine being there is relationship ... God is not alone ... God is the original source of every I and Thou.¹⁰

Jesus, therefore, is the clue, model, exemplar of both God's inner-relatedness and humankind's need to be discovered in relationship. If we want to know what it means to be truly human, we look to the true human, Jesus, and looking there we discover the call to relationship, fellowship, community. The Church, which exists in part to remember and celebrate Jesus' life, death and resurrection, must point its

¹⁰Ibid., III/2, 218f.

members in the direction of discovering their linkage with the Jesus event and the person Jesus, which is itself an exercise in relationship. To translate the event and the person into the now is accomplished by discovering my true humanity in relationship with other human beings.

To discover the basic form of humanity requires encounter with one another and encounter with Jesus, the real person. Worship must open persons to encounter with Jesus, from whom our understanding of what it means to be truly human derive. John Cobb says it well when he asserts:

For worship to be concerned with the discovery of what it means to be a true person is for worship to reveal not only our need for one another but also our need of God and deliverance from the limitations the 'I' and 'we' impose upon our humanity via the works of sin. Jesus' words open their hearers to Christ by shattering established self-images in a context of ultimate reassurance.¹¹

Cobb makes a distinction not only between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith but also between Christ and The Logos:

The Logos is the ordering of potentiality in its relevance to the ever-changing world. Christ is that ordered novelty insofar as it is incarnate in the world. The appropriate response, whether called faith or reason, is the actualization of the proffered potentiality, thus sharing in the deepening of the incarnation.¹²

The worship and sacramental life of the church exists to deepen awareness and experience of the incarnation.

The real past event of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, involving his total being, has established a sphere of effectivity or a Field of Force into which people can enter. To enter the field is to have the efficacy of the salvation event become causally determinative of increasing aspects of one's total life. Faith, the ethical life, the Church, and the sacraments, are all to

¹¹Cobb, p. 127.

¹²Ibid., p. 94.

be understood in this context. Certainly it is the context within which the Christian experiences the deeper meaning of justification.¹³

To speak of Jesus' field of effectiveness, or field of force, is to speak of a reality not dissimilar to Paul's image "The Body of Christ." To be in Christ's body is to be a member of a body:

That is constituted by the real presence in the believers of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The results are, therefore, not to be understood psychologically alone as the consequences of the attitudes adopted, or socialologically alone as the consequences of the association with other believers. They are to be understood as the real efficacy of Jesus Christ as this is enhanced and intensified by suitable psychological and sociallogical factors.¹⁴

Cobb asserts, with Paul, that Jesus is the distinctive and unique revelation of God, i.e. creative-transforming Love, in that the Christ or incarnate Logos, is constitutive of Jesus' structures of existences. Therefore, to be in Christ is to enter into a sphere of influence in which those same structures operant in Jesus are operant in the believer. The field of force is generated by Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Jesus' life includes his teachings, his words, as well as his works, peculiar style of authority and person. "Both the field of force and encounter with the teaching of Jesus open believers to the effective work of creative transformation."¹⁵

"The relation to Jesus that facilitates the work of Christ is maintained consciously and intentionally, especially through the proclamation of the word and participation in the sacraments."¹⁶

¹³Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁴John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 107f.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 106.

Therefore, to be in Christ is to enter a field of force which has already been generated by Jesus. Alignment in that field of force reconstitutes the believer, who now becomes a member of a community "that is consciously dedicated to maintaining, extending and strengthening the field of force generated by Jesus."¹⁷ The field of force "puts out" energy which attracts a person "in," then, having done that, it reconstitutes or recreates the person in such a way that he or she now becomes part of the process of renewing and reinforcing the power and outreach of that field of force. Jesus' field of force is, therefore, attracting, engaging and inspiring. It is a dynamic and on-going process in which the believer is constantly being recharged by Jesus' force and, in response to that change, compelled to amplify the changes which expand the field of force.

Jesus' total being includes his words and his works and his person and his special brand of authority which at one level generates the words, works and person, while at another level is derived from the words, works and person. Over and over again the Gospel, especially Mark (early) and John (late) attest to the fact that Jesus spoke and acted as one with authority "not like the doctors of the law." (Mark 1: 22-26) Jesus approached situations with authoritative confidence which, in turn, made things happen which created for the hearer or witness, while in Jesus' presence, an atmosphere of great authority.

So startling and even disorienting was Jesus' approach that some persons were forced to re-evaluate their assumptions about the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 107.

very nature of reality itself, to say nothing of having to confront the validity of accumulated tradition and tutilage. If the "who" of worship is God in Christ and the "what" of worship is to discover our true humanity, then surely the "why" of worship is to be brought into Jesus' field of force and effectiveness to the end that we are opened to the "Logos as the power of creative transformation...."¹⁸ In that creatively transformed place some of us will be forced to re-examine our assumption about life itself and to question the appropriateness of what we have learned in the past to what we are confronting now. In the context of reassurance which must be the Church in its worship life, Christian existence becomes a "repeated process of giving itself up to what is unknown."¹⁹

The design of worship then must be done in ways which are intended to focus worshippers on the person of Jesus, his words and authority as a lure toward the ordered novelty and creative transformation of the Christ, which beckons persons beyond the Christ to the divine Logos and its infinite potentiality for transformation. When persons are drawn into Jesus' field of force the power of the spirit which is unleashed becomes enabling, empowering and transforming. Accordingly, a worship event does not want to be so planned out that it leaves no room for spontaneity or so rehearsed that it does not allow for surprise.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁹Ibid.

The clearest evidence of being in Jesus' field of force, especially in the worship experience, is the inspiration of the spirit of Jesus which operates through and creates spontaneity and surprise. It is in these moments that novelty occurs and transformation takes place.

"The Christian Community - the true Church," according to Barth, "arises and is only as the Holy Spirit works - the quickening power of the living Lord Jesus Christ."²⁰

It is the Holy Spirit, or the work of the Holy Spirit, which constructs the Church. That work is most palpable and perceptible when the community comes together as the congregation of the Lord, working, confessing and giving itself to be known as such before God in the world.²¹

The name given to that work is WORSHIP. Barth goes on to observe:

It is not only in worship that the community is edified and edifies itself. But it is here first that this continually takes place. And if it does not take place here it does not take place anywhere.²² Here all are turned to all in a basic equality and spontaneity, as hearers and doers of the word of God.²³

In that experience of equality and spontaneity the Holy Spirit moves to quicken, enliven and edify. The Holy Spirit cannot be predicted or controlled by doctrines or even forms of worship. It is in the process of turning to one another inside Jesus' field of force, before God, that worship itself unfolds and happens. It is the Spirit then which builds the community and it is the worshippers' response to that Spirit which turns worship into a unique expression of The Faith.

²⁰Barth, IV/2, 617.

²¹Ibid., IV/2, 638.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., IV/2, 639.

Central to this process is the worship enabler or enablers.

The Pastor, and those whom he or she engages with him or her, must be committed to process rather than performance and understand clearly that they are conduits for the events, not the events themselves.

Worship - the attributing of worth - is an inner response. It is an attitude of mind, a posture of total personality. It cannot be commanded or commandeered any more than love or faith. It must be wooed and won, it must be inspired and stimulated. Unfortunately, much of worship seems to be planned on the basis of Pavlovian psychology. The proper stimuli are expected to invoke or provoke the proper responses ... The results of this approach to worship ... Make a machine of the worshipper and leave him or her to identify worship with a particular type of place, a special kind of music, and a definite plan of procedure ... The plan or form ought not to be a straight-jacket inhibiting response, but a guide providing clues to enable one to respond more wholeheartedly ... We will achieve our goal more readily if we approach the opportunity with eagerness of spirit, openness of mind, and a wholehearted desire to have fellowship with all of life around us.²⁴

In that process worship enablers themselves must be participants in the very process they are trying to facilitate. It is no longer adequate for the Pastor, for instance, to play Worship Leader, controlling what transpires through the printed liturgy or the typed manuscript or via the mantle of authority which gets thrown over him or her as a result of the office he or she occupies. The Pastor, too, must be vulnerable to the events of the worship experience and, as a consequence of his or her relationship to Jesus' field of force, demonstrate his or her willingness to be transformed, recreated, changed - which becomes a more powerful sermon than any words could speak. What the Pastor says, in experiences such as that, is "I trust, I risked, it didn't happen

²⁴William Gold, Worship in Liberal Religion (Boston: Pamphlet Commission, Unitarian Universalist Association, August 1967).

the way I thought it would, I survived and, not only am I O.K. anyway, I'm better." That attitude is persuasive in its permission-giving to the faint-hearted and even the skeptical.

The pastor's relationship to Jesus' field of force is the ingredient which gives worship integrity. To keep faith with the congregation and to protect the honor of the pulpit, which I believe we are charged to do, requires that I be in relationship to Jesus' field of force and, therefore, the Christ of faith and the divine Logos. And I am responsible to that even when it does not show. At the risk of appearing to have abandoned my tradition for pietism, let me add that to keep myself in relationship to what Alcoholics Anonymous calls "my Higher Power" requires daily maintenance of a Spiritual program, which includes solitude, active and passive prayer, meditation and study of Scripture, as well as textiary materials. Those are vehicles which have the power to transform us and that transformation, in turn, lends credibility to what we are trying to accomplish with our congregants. I have not read recently anything about worship which includes attention to the one or ones who are charged with enabling that event. I think that is unfortunate and, even at the risk of sounding unduly pious, I believe it is time for pastors to get serious and intentional in this regard. Besides - wondrous things take place in that process.

Yet another important function of worship is the revelation of the relationship between faith and conduct. The recognition of this connection between conduct and faith is mated then with the understanding that the reformation of faith is the reformation of life and that the great work of Christ for moral beings is Christ's work as the

renewer and transformer of faith. It is not sufficient for worship and expressions of the faith to lead to a "business as usual" mentality. Our life together in the church, as experienced in worship, must propel us in the direction of transformed conduct and compel us toward a reformation, a renewal of faith itself.

Who, in modern times, has been more articulate on this subject than Richard Niebuhr?

Christ redeems us by restoring us to God, by winning us out of our distrust and fear of the Holy One, by drawing us away from our despairing trust in idols and in self. Faith in God is the gift of God through Jesus Christ and with that all things are given, including the transformation of human conduct.²⁵

Niebuhr goes on to say "Where faith in God is present the self is free from concern for itself."²⁶

It seems to me that this finally is what worship must be about - using that weekly hour and a half, or whatever, to engage and inspire worshippers in such a way that faith in God is renewed and so that freedom from pre-occupying self-concerns, for those moments at least, takes place. In those moments of faith and freedom, we experience new possibilities for our own becoming. Daniel Day Williams offers a poignant comment in this regard "we know our humanity not in looking back to a lost perfection, but in looking forward towards the consummation of the new creation."²⁷

²⁵Richard H. Niebuhr, Evangelical and Protestant Ethics (New York: Smith, 1950), p. 219.

²⁶Ibid., p. 224.

²⁷Daniel Day Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 170.

Surely that new creation will not be just another self-help cure for what ails us. In our time, surrounded as we are by so many self-help programs promising us everything from "happiness in 30 days" to our "first million by the age of 30," it becomes increasingly important for the Church and Worship to give people what no self-help program can, namely a sense of belonging, belonging to one another and to God. Here again Williams is helpful "human life is the search for the love which fulfills the will to belong, and which has passed through the story of love's betrayal and found a new possibility of hope."²⁸

It is in the moments of worship that the Christian must experience belonging in its most powerful forms and thus be free to receive love and hope for that is the fulfillment of the promise. To the extent that worship can make that happen it has been the medium for the message and the promise. The biggest hope of all is, of course, that in having experienced true humanity in relationship, having been drawn into Jesus' field of force, and having experienced the renewing, life-giving power of the faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, we will be enabled to reach out and identify with the Cause of Christ and seek to bring other pieces and other persons into conformity with Christ as well. That would be true worship!

Finally, no Theology of Worship today would be complete without directing some attention to the issue of language. The subject is much too vast and interconnected to allow for comprehensive treatment in this dissertation. However, not to look at the problem at all is to

²⁸Ibid., p. 191.

minimize its significance.

Language is the most sophisticated set of symbols known to humankind. Symbols shape our imagery systems and those systems influence and give rise to belief systems. To employ an exclusively masculinized set of symbols with which to designate God is for the recipient of those symbols to fashion in imagination a male construct or picture or image for and of God. That God should be thought of as male is not in and of itself bad. That God should be thought of or symbolized only as a male person, however, not only truncates imagination but also limits God and the variety of roles and modes in and through which God can be experienced.

The object, therefore, of discovering new language and symbols for God is not simply to neuterize God but to balance the available images to free persons to have open and flowing access to the experience of God. It is my experience both with myself and others that many experiences with and of God have been missed or discounted because they did not communicate in predefined and traditionally sanctioned symbols.

The very process of opening the language opens persons to new possibilities for encounter and experience with the living God. Employing images, both Scriptural and extra-Scriptural, which point to aspects of God other than God's maleness and those attributes associated with maleness, free God and us from the limitations of our definitions. This is as much, and maybe more, a theological issue as it is a feminist concern.

To facilitate this awareness in our Church, those persons working with me as Scripture readers/presentors, liturgists and/or

enablers, are asked to be sensitive to language. They are encouraged to replace male pronouns with "God" or "Godself" when referring to God and to employ "persons" or "people" or "ones" when referring to groups which would have included men and women. That is used to replace the usual designation "men" when referring to groups. We have also determined to point out inclusive words in the Doxology and Gloria Patri to aid people in seeing other ways of imagining God.

In the Bible Study Groups, I have begun in an intentional way to draw people's attention to the female aspects of God. The androgynous character of Jesus, his treatment of women, his employment of female images for God, e.g. Luke 15: 8-10; 18: 1-8; 13: 31-35.

In the Growth Group we have taken on The Tao of Physics, which focuses attention on the balancing of all our understandings. The author, Fritjof Capra, uses oriental religions, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Chinese Religions to point to the ancient appreciation of the need for balance and harmony AND to articulate other religious sensitivities which affirm that there are female qualities inherent in the conception of the Divine Principle or God.

Almost any effect in this area is better than no effect, recognizing, as we must, that there are no easy and quick solutions to the problems of language. As John Cobb notes "...our best chance is to allow our images to develop fully."²⁹ To encourage that process will, in the long run, not only open the language but also the entire worship experience.

²⁹ Cobb, p. 264.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER
RUNNING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN ROAD
..... WITH THE BUTTERFLIES.

How do I translate all those fine theological reflections from the preceding chapter into a project for our church? How can I translate theological reflection into lived-out experience? Those questions form part of the task of the project. The goal of the entire project was, and is, for The Worship Experience To Become The Single Most Important Happening In The Life Of Our Church; For Worship To Become The Work(s) Of The People. To achieve that goal required the establishment of certain objectives and the implementation of various strategies. This phase of the project will focus on the expressed goal, the objectives and strategies we established and what we did and are doing. The second half of the project will consider the results we have had to date.

The objectives I will discuss are:

- 1). To involve more persons in the preparation of the Service of Worship.
- 2). For "The Book" to become the unifying principle of our worship experience and for us to become people of "The Book."
- 3). To draw people in intentional and identifiable ways into The Field of Force of The Christ of faith and Jesus of history.
- 4). To make apparent the work of the Holy Spirit among us by maximizing the opportunities for spontaneity and surprise, while maintaining a basic level of serenity.

- 5). To create opportunities and encourage people to encounter one another.
- 6). To establish means by which to gather "feed-back" from the congregation.
- 7). For the pastor to become responsive in visible and on-going ways to the information gathered.
- 8). To stimulate new understandings of the Sacraments.
- 9). To generate an expanded view of Christian Education.

I would like to start by sharing a bit of our history in order to set something of a context for this subject.

It was not difficult for me to convince our people that worship is the single most important weekly happening in our church. Sheer numbers of people gathered in one place at the same time had already so persuaded the people. It was difficult inculcating the understanding that worship is a happening. Our church had become accustomed to a set order of worship which contained the same elements week after week. The arrangement was that altogether familiar piece which looked like this:

Organ Prelude

Processional Hymn

Call to Worship

Invocation

Gloria Patri

Anthem

Scripture

Sermon

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Offertory and Doxology

Closing Hymn

Benediction

Worship was always conducted in the Chapel, only adult males ushered, the children were invited into the Chapel only on special occasions, announcements were made by the minister, applause was forbidden and levity an affront to solemn ritual. People sat in tidy fashion, always making sure there was ample space between pew occupants. The minister conducted the entire service and, on Communion Sundays, the deaconesses prepared the elements (Weber's bread and Welch's grape juice) and cleaned-up afterwards. The Deacons served Communion and the words of Institution and Consecration inevitably came from I Corinthians 11: 23-26. It was all very nice, smoothly run, proficiently performed and good.

Almost immediately upon arrival in Thousand Oaks, I started tampering with the sacred format and, just as immediately, it seemed as if the 60's had resurfaced. For some reason I saw the reaction in positive terms. I reasoned that inevitably some people leave the church when a new minister arrives and, in some ways, there is greater validity in leave-taking for reasons related to worship than there is to leaving because the minister has taken a moral stand on a "political issue." Some people saw the changes I was making in terms of changing their religion. Well, that is serious. And they were right. I was concerned to change religion from a ritualized good deed into a life-changing force and therefore to move worship out of the realm of performance on the part of a few, received passively on the part of the

many. I was committed to opening people to the joy of the Gospel and to making the Gospel come alive among us. Breaking through long-established habits of mind, reinforced by forms and structures of worship, which themselves had become the objects of worship, was to demand more time and energy than even I had anticipated.

After two years of doing things in an unsystematic, albeit creative, way and struggling with the changes and reactions to the changes by myself, within the context of the Diaconate, it occurred to me that we needed broader-based involvement in the process, and a plan which embraced more Sundays than just the next one. By that time, too, I had decided to return to school and knew at the outset that I would want to focus on worship and preaching. I gathered together the chairpersons of all our Boards (Diaconate, Trustees, Christian Education, Music, Outreach), plus representatives of other groups (Youth, Women's Fellowship, Live Oaks - over-60 group -) and began the process of sharing relative to what worship is from my perspective and, in turn, solicited their expectations and opinions and desires with regard to worship for themselves.

That initial effort gave birth to our first objective relative to worship: To involve more persons in the preparation of the Service of Worship. That objective, once defined, directed us toward some easy and almost obvious strategies. We determined that: a). The Diaconate, quite appropriately, needed to be involved in both the preparation for, and participation in, the Service of Worship; b)... a group of people selected at random from the congregation would be asked to join with members from the Diaconate to write original

liturgies and share in the service; c). if we were going to experiment with worship that should be made a group effort and the congregation kept informed of our plans.

From the original group, a smaller group was recruited. They began meeting regularly with me for a brown-bag supper and a time for creative sharing. That group became our first cadre of lay liturgists and worship enablers and from their efforts began to flow original liturgies and prayers which were incorporated in the morning worship. At one point we had a young man involved with us who struggled with an awesome problem of stuttering and stammering. Through the encouragement and support of the group he volunteered to read scripture and participate in public worship. I think he did more than anything I ever said, preached or taught, to convince people that worship is participation not performance and that God celebrates the worshipper, not the worship service. From Stan many people began to get the idea "if he can do it so can I and if he's willing to risk like that so will I." From that point on we got more "yeses" than "noes" to our invitation to join us and some even began volunteering to participate and write original material.

Once it was clearly established in the mind of the congregation that lay participation was here to stay and that indeed our efforts were in keeping with both our reformation heritage and congregational traditions, the group gave way to organizational construct. The Diaconate recruits a new group of participants on a quarterly basis and we know, not only week by week who will be involved, but also month by month; indeed three months at a time. It is the responsibility of

those persons to check with me each week relative to any changes that might have developed, what translation of scripture to use and any problems in understanding/interpretation they might be experiencing. If they wish to write something original they are to have that to me by Wednesday of the week they are involved. That procedure insures that their effort will be included in the Order of Worship and gives us an opportunity to consider the appropriateness of the offering for that Sunday. Those who are to read Scriptures can know for an entire year what the Scriptures for a given Sunday are, because we employ the lectionary.

Preaching from the lectionary and having lay people read Scripture on Sunday morning (and a little before in order to prepare) drew attention to the Bible. That attention got some members of the Christian Education Board asking the question: "Shouldn't we be doing more with Bible Study than we are?" Members of that Board and other church members began admitting that they really did not understand the Bible and had a negative attitude toward "Scripture." Those attitudes and questions pointed us in the direction of our next objectives: for "The Book" to become the unifying principle of our worship experience and for us to become people of "The Book."

Closely related to that objective is a third objective which the Christian Education Board and I identified. We reasoned that through the Book we are made aware of Jesus, his life, words and works. Since we agreed that "we are striving to be more like Jesus," it seemed, therefore, by opening the Book we just might be compelled even more intensely by Jesus. We determined we wanted to explore ways in which

to draw people into Jesus' field of force.

One of the immediate problems we faced was the fact that our church is no different from many sophisticated, suburban, mainline churches with regard to scripture. We are Biblical illiterates. From the beginning they insisted that I be a "Biblical Preacher," while, at the same time, not knowing if I was reading and preaching from Shakespeare or Psalms. (Is there a real difference?) The need for Bible Study and inclusion of Biblical material in our Church School curricular became obvious. The Christian Education Board and I attempted several Bible Studies with little success and even less impact. We even took a "cut at" Sunday School for adults with even less success. Then it occurred to me that if we could make connections between what got studied and what got said and done within worship, we might interest a few more people with the relevance of the Book to our lives and then they might understand why it was appropriate that they wanted me to be a "Biblical Preacher."

Additionally, the Diaconate and I determined that by employing the lectionary, not only could we lend some purposive direction to our liturgical year, but also we could raise consciousness with regard to this vast network known as Christendom, a network which includes us and connects us to a larger community - past and present.

The Diaconate, the Christian Education Board and the Church Council suggested some strategies of their own. They encouraged me to continue preaching from the lectionary and to provide all Board chairpersons and our special "Worship Group" with the lectionary for the entire year; periodically design a Service of Worship which allows for

questions and answers between pastor and congregation as pertains to given scriptural texts; occasionally print the scriptures in the Sunday bulletin; print the lectionary and the sermon titles for the coming month in our newsletter.

We began printing the lectionary and sermon titles in our monthly newsletter, and each week I would encourage people to read the Scriptures for the next Sunday. That was encouraged not simply to give people clues to what I might be doing but to engage people in an imaginative process with regard to those Scriptures and what "The Group" might do with them. Ah, yes! We formed another group.

In an effort to tie a few persons more tightly to the Bible, I hand-picked eight people who could meet with me during the day, identified the group as one which would be helping me with my doctoral project and discovering innovative styles around the presentation of Scriptures for Sunday morning. I did not identify the group as "Bible Study."

We met (and are meeting) on Wednesday mornings. Together we read the three texts. We do some exegesis together. I lend some hermeneutical assistance. Together we attempt to expose the texts in light of our contemporary experience. Then we brainstorm and fantasize the style of presentation which will be most appropriate to those Scriptures. Sometimes we create a play; sometimes we stage a forum or a debate; sometimes we use "straight" readings, and most of the time we engage a significant portion of the congregation in the process. For instance, on Epiphany Sunday, one person was Herod, three others the astrologers. One person, acting as a narrator, was a reporter from the Thousand Oaks "Star Gazette." Those persons were assigned their roles

on Wednesday. On Sunday, before the service, we asked the Chancel Choir to act as the Chief Priests and Scribes, and a mother, along with her 5 month old son, to become Mary and Jesus. We asked the chair-person of the Trustees to be Joseph. During the enactment we turned the entire congregation into "all Jerusalem." It was a stunning experience and one those present will not soon forget. That altogether familiar story became a brand-new experience and opened people in novel ways to the meaning of "Arrival."

To be sure, our results are not always so impressive but the point is that people are beginning to have a different relationship to Scripture, so that now when we employ a "straight" reading most people are listening, rather than planning their afternoon schedule. When the Gospel lesson revolves around Jesus' words or deeds, most often we ask someone who communicates power to be Jesus and we attempt to translate our understanding of why Jesus came across as someone with new authority, acting and speaking in stunning ways, by using a contemporary counterpart to Jesus' original situation. When the Gospel involved Jesus in the call of the first four disciples, Jesus became a free-lance engineering consultant addressing himself to four engineers, their frustrations and disappointments with their life-style and the "rat-race." He invited them to come away from it all and become engineers of the human heart. One man wanted to know how long the contract was good for and the response was "for as long as there are human hearts." That was a quiet and touching moment. We are having a creative and exciting time with this piece of the project.

Some of the objectives of this project emerged as we went along.

Other objectives were defined by me before we began. In response to my constant reference to the Holy Spirit, going with the flow of the Spirit, and becoming conduits for the power of the Spirit, people began to talk about the Holy Spirit. "What is it?" "Where does it come from?" "How does it work?" Those were some of the questions people were asking. My theological and/or Biblical explanations notwithstanding, the one explanation they were able to relate to was: "The clearest evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit are spontaneity and surprise." They also responded to the notion that Jesus is experienced among us through the power of his spirit wherever two or three are gathered together and are encountering one another and Jesus.

Out of that mix then, I shaped another objective for worship and this project: To learn to trust the movement of the Spirit by maximizing opportunities to experience spontaneity and surprise.

The Diaconate encouraged departing from "regular" styles of preaching; all boards agreed that a time for fellowship within the context of worship would be a "good thing" if people knew what was acceptable - including having announcements and expressions of concern made by the congregation (as long as they were not too long); the Church Council and the Christian Education Board suggested designing some method by which to get "feed-back" from the congregation; and many people urged us to continue having "special Scriptural presentations, but not every Sunday."

Initially there was some negative feeling expressed at my departures from the "regular sermon" format. Many people just wanted me to "do my thing." With the help of the Diaconate and our special

Worship Group, and my own repeated insistence that we were/are attempting to open all our channels to the Holy Spirit, the complaints began to subside. Those helps notwithstanding, however, I really do believe that if I did not love preaching so much and if our people did not know that, and if I were not reasonably effective as a preacher, I doubt that this strategy would have worked. By knowing my relationship to preaching, when I started "messing around" as one man put it, there was high level trust and the realization I was neither trying to evade an unpleasant task nor devaluing something because I did not think it important. People assumed I was doing what I was doing for a purpose which was well thought out, and that I was trying to open all of us to new possibilities. Consequently, most of the time most of us look forward to those departures.

It has long been my contention that Protestant congregants are much too reliant on words and not enough reliant on the Word. The sermon is not the only means of communicating the Gospel. Sometimes sermonizing is not even the best method of proclamation. For the Gospel to burst in on persons in ever-fresh and new ways requires opportunities for the Gospel to communicate apart from the preacher and her or his articulations. Therefore, with regularity we insert other styles of proclamation into the sermon period or abbreviate the sermon time in order to increase time for other kinds of happenings.

We employ much from the world of music to help us grasp in experienced and evocative, rather than analytical and diagnostic ways, the contemporary situation. The music of Joan Baez, Judy Collins, John Denver, Kriss Kristofferson, Stephen Sondheim, Jim Croce, "Annie,"

"Jesus Christ Superstar" and the like, have been the content of the sermon time. I add simple and short homiletical reflections in an effort to point people to the whole of life as the arena for God's activity and the Christ event, even when it is not so named. Attitudes toward "sacred music" and the "appropriate business" of the Church are changing, consequently.

"The Holocaust," "The Corn is Green," "Superman," "Saturday Night Fever," "The Exorcist," "Champions: A Love Story" have been the focus of Sunday worship and sermon. Poetry reading and contemporary art works are employed to expand everyone's imaginative processes and to get them looking at the symbols and images and metaphors of life and in their lives.

To get people to look at one another and to care about one another, we have a period of fellowship in the midst of the service which is not simply a time for announcements or passing the registration form. It is a real opportunity for people to share what they are doing and where they are coming from and what they are engaged in with regard to the Church and anything they are going through for which they want prayers and support. Not everyone can say these things out loud. Those who cannot, write them down. Then those concerns become part of the prayers for and of the people which are offered by the pastor. We build time for quiet within the service; real quiet, that is, not just a pause; long periods of quiet which allow people time to hear the sounds of their own being, to hear God prompting them, to reflect on what has been happening. There is no way to predict from week to week who will be having what needs or what will have transpired thereby

requiring more quiet. There is no way of anticipating the confluence of pastor, people, moment and Spirit. Most of our people most of the time now come expecting the unexpected and a willingness to flow with the Spirit and be recipients of Grace mediated through spontaneity and surprise. The net effect of that trust is an expanded capacity for risk-taking on the part of individuals within the context of their own lives.

Additionally, through this kind of engagement people have exposed themselves and revealed how different we are one from another, while, at the same time, being knit together in our common bond of our shared humanity. People feel free to disagree and confront one another and give expression to their wants and needs.

Now these happenings did not simply start happening in some miraculous fashion. The Church Council and I designed a Registration Form¹ which calls for certain information AND provides people with an excuse for encountering the person next to, in front of, and in back of them. It aids people in overcoming the initial awkwardness they might feel in attempting to reach out and make contact, especially for or to a newcomer.

The special "Pastor's Project" group designed an evaluation sheet² which calls for certain information to aid me and others in planning for future worship events. The evaluation sheet itself becomes a ministry because often people reveal something that is going

¹See Appendix "A"

²See Appendix "B"

on with them that requires follow-up and outreach.³ The form also gives people an opportunity to complain and criticize, and do so anonymously, if they are so inclined.⁴

Within a very short period of time it became obvious that if I was going to call for evaluation, I would need to "do something" with that information. That realization gave rise to another objective, namely that I, as pastor, must become responsive in visible ways to the information gathered. Accordingly I determined I would review the registration and evaluation forms Sunday afternoon and plan part of my week around any needed follow-up. I hold regular discussions with all concerned persons relative to what is reflected about our worship and my preaching. I set for myself the task of responding in specific ways to what people offer, suggest and even criticize.

About every 4-6 weeks, I use part of our fellowship time to let people know what has been said on these forms, to reflect on the comments and to let them know of my awareness of suggestions they have made⁵ or requests they have articulated or complaints they have mounted.⁶ I also let them know of a date and time when they can anticipate some tangible results on some of their suggestions. I suppose it is obvious by now, but people really do need to receive feed-back when they are asked to perform a specific task, in part to know what they are about counts for something and to reinforce their willingness to continue performing that specific task.

³See Appendix "C"

⁵See Appendix "E"

⁴See Appendix "D"

⁶See Appendix "F"

Often people complain about the music, the hymns we sing or do not sing. We attempt to integrate the music into the service and to have not only the special music but also the hymns reflect the thematic thrust of the morning. To be sure, we have some "olders" who do not like the "new" songs and music and we have "youngers" who do not appreciate "those old-timey hymns." In an effort to achieve some degree of support from both groups, from time to time we insert cards into the Order of Worship and ask people to write down the titles and/or page numbers of their favorite hymns/songs or any special requests they might have.⁷ Out of the process, "Amazing Grace," which is not in our hymnal, has become a favorite of all and "Morning Has Broken," which is in our hymnal, a regular.

I meet regularly with our Choir Director and the chairperson of the Music Board to discuss ideas they have and plans I have. We do theological reflecting on the meaning and significance of the music and we discuss various traditions and styles and try in some intentional way to expose the congregation to a variety of sounds and contributions. Our hope is that through this process we will help people make connections, not only to a vast communal network in the "here and now" but also to that expansive history out of which we have come and to which we are linked. In a highly mobile and transient community such as ours, trying to stimulate a sense of belonging and rootage in the church and the church's history becomes a challenging and necessary work.

Obviously from the foregoing it must be apparent that the

⁷ See Appendix "G"

Sunday morning Order of Worship, or Bulletin as so often called, is not simply a "program" or a routine handout. It, itself, has become integral to worship. By its very design it attempts to communicate that worship is a dynamic happening engaging all of us. Of course, part of the intent of the "Bulletin" itself, by its very appearance, is to attract people into the world of novelty, to break open old mind-sets, and to open them to an event which is about to happen. I take responsibility for designing it, pulling the pieces and parts together in some aesthetic and cohesive whole. Our Secretary is not a mere typist/mimeographer in this process. "The Order of Worship" becomes an opportunity for her to exercise some aesthetic sensitivity and make a real contribution to the Service of Worship. She lays it out, decides on the format, chooses the graphics and then has volunteers help her put it together. The Orders of Worship vary from week to week and they themselves become instruments in the worship event. On occasion we even have people come early on Sunday morning to get a "Bulletin" to help them decide whether or not they are going to stay that morning.^{8,9,10,11}

To intensify our awareness of being drawn into Jesus' field of force and to open up greater opportunities for encounter, we have devoted much time and attention to the Sacraments. Nowhere in the life of our church has the reality of interconnectedness in relationship to Jesus' field of force and the ordered novelty of the Christ

⁸ See Appendix "H"

⁹ See Appendix "I"

¹⁰ See Appendix "J"

¹¹ See Appendix "K"

been more dramatically evident than in our sacramental life. For so long in so many churches my experience with the sacraments had been disappointing at best. So often Communion has come across like something we are supposed to do periodically whether we need it or not - a paeon to tradition devoid of power and empty of life-imparting significance. The ritualized solemnity of the ceremony seemed so often to be its own focus, pointing to little beyond itself other than the "night in which Jesus was betrayed." Communion seemed to have little to do with communing with anyone or anything other than our private thoughts. Plus, if that ceremony or sacrament is being rehearsed but four times a year, it is even more difficult to inculcate new possibilities for understanding and practice. Very soon after my arrival in Thousand Oaks we began celebrating Communion on the 1st Sunday of every month, as well as Christmas Eve and Maundy Thursday.

My feelings about the sacraments, coupled with the reaction to having Communion so often, made the next objective necessary.

To offer new meanings and new styles of celebrating the Lord's Supper and Baptism became an objective borne of necessity. The strategies I employed then were simple: Just do whatever I have to do to translate what I believe and know to make the sacraments come alive. Then two summers ago, I took a Preaching and Worship Class with Fred Craddock and began to get a little more strategic. It became obvious once again that I was going to have to engage others in the process with me and find ways to include the laity and their sensibilities in what I was attempting to do.

Part of the strategy required ways in which to get people

communing with one another apart from church. Another strategy was to get many persons involved in the preparations for the Lord's Supper, not just the deaconesses. Actually baking the bread and presenting the elements on Sunday morning seemed a likely way to go.

Two years ago, I started talking with our Board of Stewards and the Diaconate Board about all the other occasions in which Jesus gathered with his friends and disciples around a common meal to talk about the events of the day and share the unfolding drama of their corporate experience. I began preaching about table fellowship as we learn about it from the Lukan Gospel. From these expressions there began to emerge the notion that to commune together in memory of Jesus meant bringing what we remember into the now. Jesus ate more than one meal in his lifetime. By experience alone it seems to me we can conclude that if it was through and in the context of a common meal he chose to be remembered then that kind of gathering and sharing must have been important to him. The Stewards began having "table fellowship" in their own homes.

Out of that understanding then began to develop a freer attitude toward Communion and, by employing a variety of texts from the Gospels reflective of common meal sharings, people began to open up to the celebrative aspects of Communion.

Next, I suggested to the Diaconate that rather than simply taking funds out of the Treasury to purchase Weber's bread and Welch's grape juice and neatly preparing everything on Saturday to be equally neatly placed on the altar in secret, so that when people arrived at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday everything was magically ready, it was perhaps not

the only way we had to go about communing. Soon all began to get the idea of having persons in the congregation bake and bring the bread to be used. I would ask different persons to be bread bakers every month. The bread bakers would then bring the bread to the altar, which we moved from the back wall of the Chancel to the floor of the Sanctuary, and, after the Communion Hymn, share with the congregation what their experience baking the bread was and what it means to them to be giving to the congregation the bread which now becomes our symbol for Jesus' body celebrated in our corporate body. The loaves are presented whole, I break one loaf and everyone in turn, as the deacons and the deaconesses take the bread to the pews, breaks off a piece and either feeds or hands a piece of bread to his/her neighbor. The Communion servers start the process at the end of the pew and each month special words are employed to facilitate passing the bread on. ("The Body of Christ for new life," "The Life of the Christ be in you," etc.) The Communion servers and I share with one another. We hold our individual communion cups until all are served and, with the saying "To Life" or "For New Life" or "Christ calls us to Life", we drink together and all say together "Amen."

The remnants of the Communion bread are shared during the Coffee Fellowship after the Service and when an entire loaf is left over, I give it to someone to take home and do so reminding people that such was the practice of the early Church, taking left-over Communion bread to the poor or the "shut-in." When there are those absent due to illness and/or incapacity, someone from the Diaconate and I take Communion to them.

On Maundy Thursday Communion is truly a special event. We have tried, the Diaconate and I, to research diligently what foods would have been on that Passover table, and what the Passover meal experience would have been. We literally simulate something of 1st Century Palestine and Judaism into our Chapel. We take everything out of the Chancel and place in it a rough wooden table and benches. Thirteen of us sit around a candle-lit table spread with figs, olives, fetta cheese, dates, nuts, fish, lamb, wine and flat bread, reflect on the history of Israel and talk with one another about Jesus, who he was and what he means to us. Eventually we include the entire congregation in the sharing and then we invite everyone to come share the meal with us. We even supply a common cup.

On Christmas Eve, we celebrate Jesus' birth with music and communion and people process to the altar to receive the bread and the common cup of wine (or individual cups of grape juice if they prefer - we have a 6% alcoholism factor in our Church, so, out of respect for them, we provide an alternative for those who prefer grape juice). Communion is special and we have attempted to make it special, uniquely special every time we commune.

Similar attempts at specialness are directed toward baptism. To this point what gets done around baptism has been done primarily by me. The Diaconate and Christian Education boards are in the process of thinking through a possible program which would engage the one to be baptized, or the parents of an infant, in a teaching-learning situation.

When a person or parents indicate their desire to be, or have their child, baptized, they begin a period of study with me. I point

them to Scripture, Luke 4: 1-30 (understanding baptism requires understanding something of the Temptations and Jesus' ministry and the powerful linking with Jesus baptism invites); the second chapter of Acts (understanding baptism requires understanding the power of the Spirit being invited into one's life) and to the tradition, primarily Congregational and Evangelical and Reformed traditions.

When persons have completed that study with me, we then write the Baptism liturgy in which the entire congregation participates on the occasion of the baptism. The one to be baptized and/or the parents of the one to be baptized, share with the congregation the special meaning of the baptizing event. After I have anointed the subject, if the one is a baby, I elevate him or her and say "welcome to the household of God, the family of faith and this your new family in Christ." Then members of the Diaconate, and any congregant so moved, is invited to come forward, lay hands on the newly baptized and say "Welcome in the name of Christ." All but the process of physical elevation is bestowed on older children and adults. The intention here, of course, is to turn baptism into a powerful drama which visibly and communally links the subject to the historical Jesus, the body of Christ and to one another. In quite specific ways, more than any preaching about, this act is designed to draw people into Jesus' field of force, into the prospect of the ordered novelty of the Christ and the limitless potential for creative transformation of the Logos.

Finally, this project has attempted, and is attempting, to awaken new understandings relative to the Christian Education enterprise. Most people, most of the time, view Christian Education as

what "gets done to and with the children while we are in Church." I maintain that everything we do is and/or needs to be about Christian Education, especially the Service of Worship. The Christian Education Board and I are always struggling with ways to make Church School exciting, how to engage more people and how to create more obvious connections between what goes on in Church and what goes on in Church School. We are also eager to communicate to adults via the educational process what Christianity is and what it is not.

One of my strategies here was to design a Bible Study related to the lectionary and approached in a "Gestalt" manner for Church School teachers only. We attempted to enable the teachers to experience, rather than understand, the scriptures for a particular Sunday and then tried to encourage them to approach the scriptures in similar manner with their students. We hoped that we would get our teachers focused more on the Bible and less on curricula and "teaching aids."

Another strategy is to involve the Church School in some way in the worship event. We requested that various grade levels be involved in the Sunday morning worship as scripture presentors similar to the style of our other Bible Study group. We reasoned that children need to be incorporated in the worship experience and not just "there" for a portion of the service, or turned into a "cute" audience for an even "cuter" children's sermon. Additionally, we hoped that these efforts would encourage people as families to share and discuss the morning happenings. A further hope was that adults would begin to develop a broader perspective and understanding of Christian Education.

We meet on Wednesday evenings, engage the three lessons for the

next Sunday, try to create an experience and pray that the teachers will translate their experience to their classes. Each grade level will have an opportunity to present scriptures and to share in a visible way in the Service of Worship. The long range intent is to inculcate the notion that we come to learn with and from one another and will do that to the extent we can enter into each one's experience, even the experiences of our children.

As an adjunct to the educational process, we have begun to focus on language and to try to find ways in which to open the language - and our theology - to more inclusive expressions. My only strategies in this area are to print out hymns and traditional responses (Doxology and Gloria Patri) using inclusive words. And I take time with those persons who are to read scripture to discuss any intended/requested language changes, discuss with them my reasons and where there is resistance, give them something to read someone, other than I, has written on the subject.

Everything I have shared and pointed to in this project design is, in one form or another, at one level or another, being embraced, engaged or employed in our Church. Viewed from one level, we have made a monumental task out of worship; viewed from another level, we have enabled most of the Church most of the time, in one way or another, to be engaged in that single most important weekly happening - WORSHIP.

The question might be raised - "Is it worth it?" The next section will attempt to respond to that question.

CHAPTER V

THE RESULTS

ONE NEW BUTTERFLY
SPREADING COLOR THROUGH THE AIR
..... DISCOVERS SPRINGTIME!

The major problem with a project such as this is measuring the results. Any criterion we establish, other than sheer numbers, is unavoidably subjective. When we attempt to employ standards by which to measure effectiveness, such as "growth" and "feelings," other than conducting individual interviews with regular worshippers at regular intervals, how can such standards be measured, again, other than in numbers? Since most people resist growth which is interpreted to mean change, how can growth be measured, especially if it is negative growth? (People leaving the church because they don't like the changes, e.g.) And how can feelings be assessed? A person might respond to an interviewer after a Service of Worship, when enthusiasm is running high, with an unqualified "yes" and then move to a "no" after reflecting on the experience (or vice versa). So, we have a problem here in measurement and assessment.

The Project Worship Committee designed a form¹² which attempts to quantify "effectivity." The problem with the form, however, is that, once again, it reduces everything to numbers. Based on numbers alone we can conclude:

¹² See Appendix "L"

- a). Since the introduction of the evaluation form;
 - b). Since beginning advance notice relative to the Sermon, its text and format;
 - c). Since offering a variety of styles for the presentation of the scriptures;
 - d). Since including more persons in the actual Worship Service;
- attendance in Sunday morning worship has increased and more people more of the time are viewing their opinions to me or someone in the church who will carry those sentiments to me.

We have not received any new members but there are more new people coming to church and expressing an interest in learning more about the church. There are more complaints as well. People seem to feel freer to take exception to what one of the scripture presentors said or did, or to the form worship takes, than they did when I was the one, visibly at least, responsible for worship.

An area of encouraging growth and change is in the Church School. When we first began the project with the Church School teachers there was considerable resistance, as evidenced by low and/or irregular attendance at our Wednesday evening Bible Study. Most of our teachers come out of a traditional background and think the Bible is fine, but ... The "buts" usually have to do with negative attitudes toward the Bible, as a result of negative experiences in their own Church School life or general misunderstanding relative to what the Bible is and is about. Additionally, most of our teachers are themselves school teachers who have been "curricularized." In their work situations the "how to" is the all important factor. Consequently, if

they do not have a plan to go by with obvious goals and points for the lesson they become critical of the procedure. Further, their view toward Church School has been one of a time to impart values or ethics, or conduct for behaviour, rather than THE STORY and our connection to it.

So we had considerable "nay saying" in the beginning. But we kept meeting and every Sunday the teachers would be exposed to the Scriptures in some contemporary fashion during the Worship Service and through the excitement and enthusiastic response of many of the children they, in turn, got "turned on" and opened to some new possibilities. A few of the teachers have begun opening the Church School period to the Bible and encouraging the children to act out the story. More and more are opening the Bible even without a study guide or teacher aids.

Another result in this area is that some of those negative attitudes toward "The Book" are beginning to lift. It begins to be common to hear people say "I didn't know that was in the Bible," or "I didn't know there was any humor in the Bible," or "I never thought the Bible could be so much fun," or "Gee, that's just like today." That, in itself, is a significant development. Then, as we strategized around the Sunday morning experience, we had originally projected those small groups as an occasion to range over some contemporary issues. (Religion and the Arts, Parent-Teen Communication, et al.) The people, especially the Christian Education folk, said "Hey, why don't we just have good old Bible Study. We can get that other "stuff" other places." For me this is a most encouraging development.

If extensivity (numbers) is one gauge of results then surely

intensity must be as well. The feed-back from Sunday morning as evidenced in the evaluation form, individual conversations and comments, makes it appear what people are experiencing, even when negative, is intense.

Prior to the beginning of this project people would "suddenly" stop coming to church or "quit" the church altogether. Sometime later I would hear they were attending another church or that someone had seen them at the supermarket and learned that they just did not like "what was going on." My attempts to follow up on their absences via phone calls and/or letters were inevitably met with reasonable explanations or silence but no renewed interest or presence in church.

Now we begin to have hints along the way and even some concrete reasons given for leave-takings, which, as it turns out, are not sudden decisions after all. For instance, back in November, one couple in the church made some notations on an evaluation form indicating they did not like the way scriptures were being presented because it seemed we were making fun of scripture and thereby trivializing the significance of scripture. In like manner, they suggested my sermons were not "Christ centered enough."

By December their discontent was significant enough to encourage them to "church shop." They are now attending another church. Although that fact does not make me happy, at least the process has provided an opportunity for people to state their thoughts and feelings relative to what is going on on Sunday mornings and, in so doing, to give me and our various "groups" an opportunity to reconsider what we are doing and whether or not to continue.

That evaluation form gives people a chance to indicate any confusions they might have experienced or points in the sermon they did not understand. Almost weekly someone makes just that observation. When that occurs I pick up on it the next week and, just yesterday, a woman said to me: "It's not a big enough concern to get upset over or give up coming to church for, because I've said what I need to say and I know you'll get around to answering me."

The most dramatic result which is in process right now is a design to move from one 10:00 a.m. service to a total Sunday morning experience. Heretofore, when moves such as this have been made they have been done so as to accommodate numbers of stylistic preferences on the part of the worshipping community. That is not what we are planning. With more people involved in Bible Study, the presentation of the Scriptures and the Worship Service, there has developed a genuine desire on the part of those already involved to share and include more in the process. Additionally, many adults have begun expressing a desire for Bible Study or "old-fashioned Sunday School" just for them.

For three months, the Christian Education Board and I surveyed the congregation relative to moving into two Services of Worship, with Church School offered for everyone between the two services. People were invited to state their preferences for the content of adult Church School. Almost without exception people said "Bible Study" and Bible Study made relevant to today. Hence, the Christian Education, Diaconate and Music Boards have been meeting with me to plan a new Sunday morning format. The proposal will be presented and voted on by the congregation in a Congregational Meeting on February 18, with the

hope of beginning the first Sunday in Lent, March 4th. The format looks like this:

8:30 - The Gathering.

Informal worship, including a song sung with guitar and/or piano, prayers, scripture verse and brief homiletical reflections, inviting sharing from the congregation, including and involving Church School youngsters.

9:00 - Dividing into Church School classes, including adults. 6 week segments of Bible Study, involving a different lay leader or leaders for each segment. ("The Unfolding Drama of the Bible;" "Life-crises and the Bible;" "Old-time Favorite Bible Stories in Now-time Dress.")

10:15 - Fellowship and coffee.

10:30 - "Regular" Worship, including Chancel Choir, Organist and "regular" sermon.

This idea has developed in response to the expressed desire on the part of many to expand the "teaching/learning" process to include more persons, to encourage the growth process and to provide people with a context in which that growth can take place. Some people are apprehensive and threatened, primarily because they fear our becoming "two Churches." There is also resistance to change and the argument is one of "numbers." "We don't really have that many people to merit the change." The actual results of this resistance will not be known for a while. My intuition persuades me that the process of the project is working. The heightened awareness of what is going to take place, coupled with more people engaged in the process of designing and

executing events on a Sunday morning, seems to have intensified many persons' sense of being related to what is going on.

For instance, several of our lay liturgists and scripture readers/presentors have passed on to the Diaconate and our "Worship Groups" comments indicating they never realized so much went into creating a service of worship and that they really do have a sense of awareness and appreciation for the process and their part in it. There is also an intensifying of the understanding that this experience is our experience, happening with us and for us now.

Since beginning the project, no one, not one person, who has been asked to participate in worship and share in the evaluation process has said "No." Some may put qualifications on their time - availability, but no one has refused to participate. One couple, in particular even told the chairperson of the Diaconate that they begin to understand that worship involves everyone, that it is our doing and not just the pastor's. That is a different experience from the perception that "what is going on is what Tari is doing to us."

A derivative benefit of that awareness is the notion that "the Holy Spirit is moving, or trying to move, through all of us and through us as an interconnected, interrelated group." Every Sunday, I "debrief" with three or four people - different people each week - and share my perceptions of our morning experience. They share too, always making observations of how they perceived the "movement of the Spirit" that morning and what seemed to be going on with others around them. That awareness, in turn, has begun to open those persons, at least, to the fact that the Spirit does not touch everyone in the same

way or with the same meanings. They begin to sense that we really do need to reflect on our experiences and reflect our experience to one another to gain appreciation for the network we are.

The awareness of "for us, through us now" has opened people to the realization that they too are ministers and are to become care-givers as well as care-receivers. During our fellowship time, more and more people are sharing concerns related both to themselves and others. More and more people submit names of persons, problems and/or situations, for whom or which they would like prayers of thanksgiving and/or intercession lifted up.

The intensity of the experience has brought some people to articulate that what happens on Sunday morning is not only important but also life-changing. As a direct result of the worship event, in the last three months, I have had two families, three single persons and two couples request counselling appointments with me. As our sessions unfolded all indicated that they want to find ways to make what happens on Sunday morning in church, happen in their daily lives at home and/or at work. They expressed desires to maintain "that feeling of belonging and centeredness" they experience in worship. All are now employing some form of meditation at home. Some have asked for specific Biblical references to help them with their day. Two people are seeking new employment opportunities because they think they count for something and are capable of taking on more. One single young woman asked "How can I get more involved in all this? So much of what I'm into, or not into, is so trivial and the 'single's scene' is the 'pits'. This all seems so important and life-sustaining."

Therefore, there needs to be something beyond the worship experience to create context, reinforce and support people in the growth and change process being opened. Hence, three more small groups are being created to gather in people's homes at regular evening and/or week-end intervals. This is another "result" and points once again to the importance of viewing worship not as a finished product, but as a process, one which gives and must give rise to other processes. I believe our people are getting that understanding.

Not all our results are positive. We have attempted to encourage people to stay after worship for a "Sermon Talk-back." I have even invited people publicly and individually. People say they are interested and would like to do that, but by the time the service is over and they have taken time for fellowship over coffee, it is too late and they need to get home. To this date we have had precious few takers of this opportunity. This problem is further compounded by the fact that, since implementing this project, at least two families have left the church or are "church shopping," because they do not like the new directions the sermon and worship are taking. Those persons did not indicate their displeasure on the evaluation forms; did not stay for a sermon talk-back; did not address their displeasure to me or anyone else in the church at the time of their distress. Only after they had been gone for a while and calls were made did the truth of the matter come out, even then they never spoke to me but to someone else and then never to someone involved in worship that day or in the various groups working at worship. That is discouraging. When people are provided a variety of ways in which to address their displeasure

with what is going on and still refuse to do so, I am hard-pressed to understand what can be done. This is a continuing source of aggravation and discouragement to me. Perhaps, in time, our small groups will become facilitators for persons who are hesitant to deal with direct confrontations over issues in the church.

There is more vocal rumbling now and, although that too becomes wearing after a while, at least the complaints are out in the open. That openness does give all of us an opportunity to deal with the problems. It also gives me a chance to respond in some concrete and effective way, even when the effect is not the one particularly wanted or expected. People are getting the sense that I, and we, hear and are taking note of them.

At Church Council, last month, we spent some time talking about our new format, the evaluation forms, and some of the "grumblings." Everyone there concluded that we are never going to please everyone and that that really is not our job. The Chairperson of the Christian Education Board stated "as long as we are providing people with real and not 'raindance' ways of letting us know what's going on with them, the rest is up to them. If people refuse to take responsibility for themselves, we cannot make them." Everyone agreed with him. The Chairperson of the Outreach Board offered that he was hearing only good things about our "new" procedures and that people really were saying they felt they now had ample opportunity to air their "gripes."

Part of the on-going problem is, however, that some persons still have the notion that to complain about something requires

immediate change which accommodates their wants and wishes. I do not have a strategy for that problem either, other than to ask people to get involved in the process and work toward what they want. Usually that suggestion is met with "that's your job."

My complaints notwithstanding, one of the more significant, even dramatic, results of the project entails what it has meant and done for me as the pastor of the church.

Shaping this project and reassessing my ministry coincided with one another. I had come to the point of wondering "What's it all about?" Even though I was still enthusiastic about my situation and in love with the ministry, I had begun to feel that, although I was doing a lot, it did not count for much or did not seem to be having any kind of real impact. Even worship and preaching, long "my things" as it were, had begun to have a sameness to them, and both suffered from a general lack of energy, from me and from the congregation.

Reflecting on Worship and Preaching in a systematic way in preparation for a doctoral project revealed the following:

- a). The excitement generated on Sunday morning derived essentially from me and what people were relating to primarily were my "vibes."
- b). Since almost everything seemed to flow from me there was little carry-over value beyond me.
- c). Much of what was getting done was too spontaneous for any context and sense of continuity to develop.
- d). People were fascinated by what was going on but not personally engaged.

- e). Too many pieces, too much of the time, fell in the cracks, rendering those who were participating (readers, choirs) frustrated and unappreciated.
- f). Whether I liked it or not, I was a tone-setter and the mantle of authority, especially regarding worship and preaching, was on me.

My style had always, or almost always, been one of action-reflection, acting before thinking, being present to the moment with not a great deal of understanding relative to the interconnection of moments and their impact on others. Additionally, I dissipated considerable energy by going in too many directions. Further it began to be clear that regardless of how much I disavowed authority and tried to inculcate an appreciation for horizontal styles of leadership, someone had to be in charge on Sunday morning, if worship was to happen.

Finally, it became apparent that, in order for worship to be more than a mood or captive to what was going on with Tari Lennon week by week, it required providing a focus beyond me. Giving people that focus was not something that I could do alone by trying to inspire people to worship. All of the groups we have established to this point deal, at some time, with what worship is about, with our corporate reality and responsibility, and all try to establish direction for an entire period of the liturgical year. And, of course, one of the derivative benefits to this point is that those persons who participate have a deeper understanding not only of Advent but also of Christmas-tide and Epiphany and the Epiphanyal time of the year. Those persons will not move this year from Christmas to Easter without taking note

of having changed not only the color of the paraments but also the emphasis and direction of worship itself.

All of the new pieces and parts of the Service of Worship have become opportunities, not only for public feed-back and attention, but also for pastoral care and private ministry. I take time with those evaluation and registration forms. Where problems or requests are indicated, I attempt a follow-up on these that week in one way or another. That behaviour tends to lend credibility to what we are trying to do on Sunday mornings and increase the trust factor for new processes and changes.

Most important of all, for me, is the fact that I have become more focussed, reflective and in command of myself and what is taking place. I do not feel pulled in a hundred different directions, always running and never quiet - never worshipful. I worship too on Sunday morning. I am a participant in the process. Things happen in and through me, not just when preaching or leading worship. In addition, I have places to go to debrief and discuss further what transpired, another benefit of the various groups.

Just three weeks ago, I had an intense coughing attack during the sermon. Between coughs I gasped out "you take over." I was gesturing to the congregation. They did and it turned out to be a real Congregational sharing around the morning Scriptures and what I had said to that point. People got me water and Kleenex and cough drops and went on with me but without me. No-one, not even I, got embarrassed. There were no stunned awkwardnesses and I did not feel compelled to apologize. We felt good about this experience. It

illustrates how far we have come with one another and that the congregation really is an interconnected group of brother and sister ministers.

The entire congregation has been aware of my project and through the process many have become aware of the reality that worship itself is a process, on-going and unending. Already what has been done is creating the ground-work for the "what more?", and most of us begin to realize that none of us is finished, that God is not done with us yet, that all our efforts are designed to realize the "what more?" and to become perpetual witnesses that the God we worship is not only worthy but alive and working and calling us all forward.

Not everyone likes the forward movement and my guess is we shall continue to lose people from time to time. As long as most of us, most of the time, stay faithful to the vision and the promise, not only will this project have been worth it but worship will have become the central and most significant event in the life of our people: the whole of their lives and our life together. For that to happen will be for worship to have become truly the works of the people, informing, inspiring and influencing the whole of their lives and making life whole.

CHAPTER VI

EPILOGUE

Each section of this dissertation has begun with Haiku poems which employ the butterfly as an image. Throughout this project the butterfly has been my central image. The butterfly, in turn, has become an important symbol in our church. The butterfly has become important to us because of its relationship to Jesus and the resurrection and its meaning to us in our journey together. Butterflies can fly against the wind and float on wind currents. The strength and the flexibility of their wings is related to their struggle to emerge from the cocoon.

We, in the Church of the Oaks, are trying to emerge from cocoons: cocoons woven out of old habits and practices, new fears and uncertainties, continuing confusions and misunderstandings. We trust that through our struggle to emerge we will develop wings strong enough to fly against the wind and flexible enough to float on wind currents.

It is to all our butterflies - emerging, flying, and even just enjoying the warmth of the cocoon - that I dedicate this project, and to our continuing flights together I commit this endeavour.

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APPENDIX

Church of the Oaks

APPENDIX A

Date _____

SUNDAY REGISTRY

(Complete or check appropriate column)

[illegible]

Comments:

CHURCH OF THE OAKS

73

EVALUATION SHEET.

1. The sermon was meaningful to me personally today.

Exceptionally

Adequate

Not at all.

1

2

3

4

5

2. I could follow and understand the sermon today.

Very Well

3. I will find practical use for the sermon, or some of its points, during my week.

Yes

4. The sermon generated conflict and confusion within me.

Definition of Solitude
is startling different from what
I am familiar with

5. I would be willing to attend a "Sermon Talk-back" after the service.

It scheduled in advance
When will this occur?

6. The style of sermon I like best is:

- X (a) Preacher to congregation ("Regular")
- (b) Dialogue with one other person.
- (c) Engagement with entire congregation.
- (d) Inclusion of music and/or the Arts as part of the sermon.
- (e) Other (Please specify)

Additional question for persons with youngsters in our Church School:

*The new integrated Bible Study focus in Church and Church School has
added a new dimension to our family discussions.*

1

2

3

4

5

APPENDIX D
CHURCH OF THE OAKS

EVALUATION SHEET.

75

1. The sermon was meaningful to me personally today.

Exceptionally

Adequate

Not at all.

1

2

3

4

5

2. I could follow and understand the sermon today.

*But I do not like the
the communion time. I.e., the duration of it. I
think the time is too long. I can't follow it. I
don't feel a deep spiritual feeling in regard to the service. It all takes away
from the actual communion to me. It is a solemnity.*

3. I will find practical use for the sermon, or some of its points, during my week.

4. The sermon generated conflict and confusion within me.

5. I would be willing to attend a "Sermon Talk-back" after the service.

6. The style of sermon I like best is:

(a) Preacher to congregation ("Regular")

(b) Dialogue with one other person.

(c) Engagement with entire congregation.

(d) Inclusion of music and/or the Arts as part of the sermon.

(e) Other (Please specify)

Additional question for persons with youngsters in our Church School:

*The new integrated Bible Study focus in Church and Church School has
added a new dimension to our family discussions.*

1

2

3

4

5

APPENDIX E

CHURCH OF THE OAKSEVALUATION SHEET.

1. The sermon was meaningful to me personally today.

Exceptionally

Adequate

Not at all.

① *in making about how anxiety makes me feel*
 ② *good to reflect on the process vs. end result and get I disagree with the philosophy*

2. I could follow and understand the sermon today.

Very well

3. I will find practical use for the sermon, or some of its points, during my week.

Definitely

4. The sermon generated conflict and confusion within me.

In that I disagree with the emphasis totally on the process. The product and end results have a definite place

In our lives. I believe more in a balance between the two rather than one way or the other. Being out of balance creates anxiety too.

5. I would be willing to attend a "Sermon Talk-back" after the service.

YES

6. The style of sermon I like best is:

(a) Preacher to congregation ("Regular") *I get so much out of it. A change in style is fine occasionally.*

(b) Dialogue with one other person.

(c) Engagement with entire congregation.

(d) Inclusion of music and/or the Arts as part of the sermon.

(e) Other (Please specify)

Thonica Wallard

APPENDIX F
CHURCH OF THE OAKS

77

EVALUATION SHEET.

1. The sermon was meaningful to me personally today.

Exceptionally

Adequate

Not at all.

1

2

3

4

5

2. I could follow and understand the sermon today.

Yes

3. I will find practical use for the sermon, or some of its points, during my week.

Yes - Clearly speaks to issues which are part of my daily life.

4. The sermon generated conflict and confusion within me.

Helped clarify focus. Generated conflict in sense the Truth always does -

5. I would be willing to attend a "Sermon Talk-back" after the service.

Would love to —

6. The style of sermon I like best is:

- 1 (a) Preacher to congregation ("Regular")
- 3 (b) Dialogue with one other person.
- 2 (c) Engagement with entire congregation.
- (d) Inclusion of music and/or the Arts as part of the sermon.
- (e) Other (Please specify)

1-23
Not any one at exclusion of other 2.

P.S.
Would prefer more guitar - folk music as children did today - to include entire congregation -
Lush sounding

APPENDIX G

Church of the Oaks

*In an effort to include your favorite hymns
in the Services of Worship, the Music Board
would like you to list three hymns to sing
sometime during the year.*

CHURCH OF THE OAKS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Thousand Oaks, California

APPENDIX H

Tari Lennon, Pastor

October 1, 1978

TWENTYETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

WORLD WIDE COMMUNION SUNDAY

A SERVICE CELEBRATING OUR LINKAGE WITH THE WORLD

Call to quiet preparation for Worship.

FOR YOUR PREPARATION:

"Christians need to remember through the feeding of the multitude that to break bread at the Lord's table implies a commitment to enable hungry brothers and sisters to break bread."

-- Arthur Simon, Bread for the World.

ORGAN PRELUDE

Vanessa Allen, Organist

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"Jesus Shall Reign"

No. 202

*THE GREETINGS

John Jensen, Liturgist

Liturgist: Good morning to you, my brothers and sisters.

PEOPLE: And good morning to you, our sister.

Liturgist: Come, let us rejoice as God's chosen people.

PEOPLE: Chosen with all around the world to build a world of peace, we come to rejoice, to pray, to share, and to grow. Let our worship be renewed and renewing commitment to be the men and women God intends us to be.

+ + + +

CALL TO CONFESSION

SILENT PRAYERS OF INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION

PRAYER OF COMMON CONFESSION

O God, you seem always willing to use us in spite of our faithlessness. We confess that while we have been chosen to be servants of humanity, we have tried to be controllers. Christ has given us the pattern of poured out life, but we crave the successes, honors, and statistics, which star us in bright lights. We have received a commission to be witnesses to the end of the earth, but in our self-interest we devote our time to oiling the machinery of our own organizations and pet projects. We have been given life, which is full, and yet have refused to accept its fullness. Forgive us, O Lord, and deliver us from our own inadequacy. Bring us to the joy of life renewed. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

SERVICE OF THE WORD

Reading from the Old Testament Isa.5:1-7 John Jensen
CHANCEL CHOIR George Willey, Director

"Come Unto Me"

Reading from the Epistle Phil.4:4-9 John Jensen
Reading from the Gospel Matt.21:33-43 Pastor Lennon
COMMUNION MEDITATION. Pastor Lennon

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Period of Quiet

Period of Intercession

Oratory and Ecology for Peace.

SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

COMMUNION HYMN "Let Us Break Bread Together" No.283

*CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Celebrant: This is the Lord's Table. As Jesus instructed his disciples, so we gather symbolically to a common meal. We share each other's lives, as we share the bread and cup, for we are indeed one vine though many branches. Coming to share, do not be mired in despair, but rather lift up your hearts!
PEOPLE: We lift then up to the Lord. Let us give thanks for God's glory. We give thanks; we rejoice in the glory of all creation in all the world.

Celebrant: The apostle Paul has written: On the night when Jesus was betrayed, he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: "This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Luke, the evangelist, has written of the risen Christ: "When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed it, and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were open and they recognized him."

PEOPLE: Lord help us to share this moment with recognition, knowing that, as we gather all over the world in your name, you are here and there among us as we go out to serve, your power of creative love is with us and, as we succeed and fail in our tasks, your forgiveness engulfs us.

CELEBRATION (Continued)

Celebrant: With all the people who were, are and will be,
with all the creation in all time, with joy we say:

PEOPLE: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, all
space and time show forth your glory now and always.
Amen.

*PASSING THE PEACE

*THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE LIFTING OF THE CUP.

Celebrant: The gifts of God for the people of God.

PEOPLE: Amen.

*SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

*CLOSING SONG

"AMAZING GRACE"

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch
like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now
I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my
fear relieved.

How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first
believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares, we have already
come.

'Twas grace that brought us safe thus far, and grace will
lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining
as the sun,

We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we
first began.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch
like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now
I see.

*BENEDICTION

*People Stand.

+ + + + Latecomers seated.

USHERS: Elaine Peterson
Florence Sperling
Joe Brock
George Kurash

GREETERS: Mary Schneider
Frances Zeledon

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

TODAY: Live Oaks Luncheon, after Church. Fellowship Hall

New member orientation - Chapel after Church.

MONDAY: All Boards at 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY: Choir Practice

SATURDAY: Recycling. Please bring your old news-
papers, cans, bottles, jars, etc. to the
Parking Lot 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

If you want to register for the Disco Class to be
taught by Maripat Davis, please call the Church Office
(4954587), letting us know whether Monday evening or
Saturday afternoon would be best for you. 5x1-hr.
classes for \$25.00 for one person and \$40 for a couple.

NIN
Neighbors In Need
Offering

APPENDIX I

CHURCH OF THE OAKS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Thousand Oaks, California

81

Tari Lennon, Pastor

October 22, 1978.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ORGAN PRELUDE

CALL TO QUIET

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP: "There are times when I experience an intense capacity. This feeling occurs most often when others are looking to me to be someone that they have every right to expect, but which I know in my heart I am not. In these moods what emerges in me is a deep hunger to open my cold, discouraged heart to God within me who I believe can and will enliven me, purge me. I believe with utter confidence that this hunger and desire is wrought in me by God, calling me to be myself."
-- James Connor from The Experience of God

THE GATHERING

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"The Church's One Foundation"

No. 260

*THE GREETINGS

Dick Cowdin, Liturgist.

Liturgist: Good morning, my friends. It is good to join with you again, to share a gathering of faith and doubt, of struggle and assurance.

PEOPLE: WE COME TO REMIND OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PERSON, A CHRISTIAN, AND A CHURCH.

Liturgist: Like any sharing, any gathering, ours will find only as much truth as our honesty will allow.

PEOPLE: WE WANT TO BE HONEST.

Liturgist: As is always true, our growth will take place as we are open to the truths, the insights, and the caring of those with whom we share.

PEOPLE: WE WANT TO BE OPEN.

Liturgist: With an honest and open spirit, then, let us proceed.

PEOPLE: LET US REACH OUT IN OUR WORSHIP TO TOUCH, AND BE TOUCHED BY THE CREATIVE SPIRIT OF LIFE ITSELF, TO RECOMMIT OURSELVES TO GOD'S UNENDING WORK OF LOVE, AND JUSTICE, AND PEACE.

+ + + +

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES SOMEONE WASN'T BEAUTIFUL AND I LOOKED AWAY.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES SOMEONE STRETCHED OUT A HAND AND I PRETENDED NOT TO NOTICE.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES SOMEONE NEEDED TO BE HELD
AND I CLUNG TO SAFETY INSTEAD.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES TRUTH WAS ON MY TONGUE
AND I SWALLOWED IT INSTEAD OF SPEAKING IT.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES LOVE WAS IN MY HEART
AND I WAS EMBARRASSED TO EXPRESS IT.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES FEAR WAS IN MY HEART
AND I DIDN'T TRUST YOU WITH IT.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES I CLAIMED TO BE AN INNOCENT BYSTANDER AND STILL I KNEW THAT BY BEING A PASSIVE PARTICIPANT I WAS GUILTY FOR ALLOWING WRONG TO BE DONE.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES A STRANGER ASKED ME FOR SOMETHING AND I PRETENDED NOT TO REALIZE WHAT HE NEEDED.

I'M SORRY FOR THE TIMES I HAVEN'T LOVED ENOUGH AND THE TIMES I HAVEN'T LOVED WITH ALL OF ME.

I KNOW YOU KNOW I'M SORRY, GOD,
AND I KNOW YOU'VE ALREADY FORGIVEN ME.

MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'M NOT ASHAMED TO BE SORRY.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS.

WELCOME - RITUAL OF FELLOWSHIP

HEARING THE WORD

A WORD ABOUT WORLD HUNGER - OUR MUPPETS.

READING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 22:21-27

82
Joyce Stephenson.

THE MUSIC MACHINE - Sherril Hyink and Company.

(Young People leave for Church School)

READING FROM THE EPISTLE

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

Joyce Stephenson.

*HYMN OF PREPARATION

"Our God, to Whom We Turn"

No. 86

READING FROM THE GOSPEL

Matthew 22:34-40

Rev. Ms. Tari Lennon.

SERMON

Rev. Ms. Tari Lennon.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

QUIET MEDITATION AND PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE.

SHARING OURSELVES AND OUR SUBSTANCE

Organ Offertory.

*DOXOLOGY

"Praise God from whom all Blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above you Heavenly Host,
Praise God, the Christ and Holy Ghost."

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

*BENEDICTION

*People Stand

+ + + + Latecomers seated.

USHERS: Herman Roller
Ralph Palmer

GREETERS: Emma Roller
Gladys Palmer

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

If our Muppets have made you think about "World Hunger" today, please help CROP to -

Give hungry people overseas A CHANCE FOR A CHANGE

and take part in our Church's effort on Sunday, November 5th. You pick up a Sponsor Sheet from the Church (or Monica Willard or Hal Sherman) and ask people to sponsor you - as many as possible - for any amount, from .10 cents up, for each mile that you walk. The Walk starts at 1:00 p.m. for the 8 miles from the Community Park on Dover and Hendrix to the Kingsmen Park at Cal Lutheran College and back. If you are too tired to finish that's O.K. or, on the other hand, you could go round again if you have the time and energy! It will be fun! Join us! What a good way to exercise!

PLEASE DON'T MISS THE "OAK LEAF" DEADLINE - MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, - TOMORROW!

CHOIR PRACTICE - Thursday at 8:00 p.m. in the Chapel.

NEXT SUNDAY - Diaconate Fun Night - "HALLOWEEN HOE-DOWN"

Join the fun. 5.00 to 8.30 pm.

PRAYER WORKSHOP - The date has been altered to Sunday, December 3rd, at 5:00 p.m.

Please save this date.

ORGAN REPAIR - Anyone wishing to help, please write "Organ Repair" on your donation envelope. Thank you!

HANDEL'S "MESSIAH" - Saturday and Sunday next, October 28 and 29. Saturday at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday at 3:00 p.m. at Californian Lutheran College. Solos by LISA LEMM AND GEORGE WILLEY, with the Combined Choirs and Orchestra of Californian Lutheran College. Call C.L.C. for Reservations, 492-2411 and ask for Box Office.

PILGRIM PLACE - 30th Annual Pilgrim Festival on Friday, November 10, and Saturday, Nov. 11th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Admission Free. Food available.

CHURCH RETREAT - Sunday, November 19, at the Janss Property in Thousand Oaks. All day.

CHURCH OF THE OAKS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Thousand Oaks, California

83

Tari Lennon, Pastor

December 24, 1978.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT



ORGAN PRELUDE

Vanessa Allen, Organist.

CALL TO QUIET PREPARATION

TO AID YOU IN YOUR PREPARATION:

"This holiday season, mend a quarrel.
 Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss
 suspicion and replace it with trust.
 Write a love letter. Share some treasure.
 Give a soft answer. Encourage youth.
 Manifest your loyalty in word and deed.
 Keep a promise. Find the time. Forgo
 a grudge. Forgive an enemy...listen.
 Apologize if you were wrong. Try to
 understand. Flout envy. Examine your demands
 on others. Think first of someone else.
 Appreciate. Laugh a little more. Deserve
 confidence. Take up arms against malice.
 Decry complacency. Express your gratitude.
 Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a
 child. Take pleasure in the beauty and
 wonder of the Earth. Speak your love,
 speak it again and speak it one more time."

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE

Monica, David and Tim Willard.
 Sally and Dick Pick.

*OPENING HYMN

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

No. 107

*THE GREETINGS

Monica Willard, Liturgist.

Liturgist: Good morning, my friends, and greetings to you in a season and day of
 expectation.

PEOPLE: WE GATHER THIS ADVENT IN A SEASON OF HOPE, WE WAIT AGAIN FOR THE BIRTH OF
 THE CHRIST CHILD, AND WE EXPECT THE REBIRTH WHICH HAS BEEN PROMISED TO US.

Liturgist: There is light to shine in darkness, there is love to break through
 despair, there is hope to lead us forward.

PEOPLE: WE COME TO FIND THE LIGHT, TO SHARE THE LOVE, AND TO REKINDLE THE HOPE,
 MAKING THIS TRULY THE ADVENT OF A NEW AGE.

*ADVENT COLLECT (In unison)

Monica Willard, Liturgist.

GOD OF LIFE, SPIRIT OF JOY, FILL US AGAIN WITH THE JOY OF NEW LIFE. HELP US NOT TO TREAT CASUALLY THE MIRACLES OF BIRTH AND GROWTH. IN A SEASON OF EXPECTATION, HELP US NOT TO BECOME OVERGROWN WITH REGRET. IN A SEASON OF JOY, HELP US NOT TO BECOME NUMBED BY OUR SORROWS. IN A SEASON OF CELEBRATION, HELP US NOT TO BECOME HAPDENED BY OUR CYNICISM. WE PRAY TODAY THAT SLENDER HOPES FOR PEACE MIGHT BECOME FIRM EXPECTATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. WE PRAY TODAY THAT IN LIFE'S RHYTHMS, JOY MIGHT AGAIN BE FELT AS REAL BY THOSE WHO STAND IN THE ARMS OF TRAGEDY. WE PRAY TODAY THAT THE CELEBRATION OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS MIGHT CONTINUALLY RE-EMERGE OUT OF ITS TINSEL ENTANGLEMENTS TO COMMUNICATE THE LOVE, AFFIRMATION, AND PEACE IN WHICH IT WAS BORN. IN EXPECTATION, JOY, AND CELEBRATION WE PRAY. AMEN.

+ + + +

WELCOME, RITUAL OF FELLOWSHIP (Sign Registration Forms)

SERVICE OF BAPTISM

Brian Richard Pick - born August 12, 1978.

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR
A WORD FROM THE PARENTS
A WORD FROM THE GODPARENTS

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM



*A WORD FROM THE CONGREGATION:

We, the members and friends of this expression of Christ's Body, receive you, Brian, with joy and gratitude for your life and pledge to you our loving support throughout our journey together; and to Brian's parents, we promise to uphold you in the faith through our prayers and our presence as we pilgrim together as the people of God.

THE LAVING ON OF HANDS

Pastor and Diaconate, while the congregation sings -

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

No. 488.

(Young people leave for Church School)

PRESENTATION OF SCRIPTURE

Marian Kurash
Herman Roller

Grover Smoyer
Frank Johnson

2 Samuel 7: 8-16

Luke 1: 26-38

Romans 16: 25-27

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, with a message for a girl betrothed to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David; the girl's name was Mary. The angel went in and said to her, 'Greetings, most favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was deeply troubled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for God has been gracious to you; you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall give him the name Jesus. He will be great; he will bear the title "Child of the Most High"; the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will be king over Israel for ever; his reign shall never end.' 'How can this be?' said Mary; 'I am still a virgin.' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy child to be born will be called "Child of God". Moreover your kinswoman Elizabeth has herself conceived a son in her old age; and she who is reputed barren is now in her sixth month, for God's promises can never fail.' 'Here am I,' said Mary; 'I am the Lord's servant; as you have spoken, so be it.' Then the angel left her."

SERMON Angels speak, old women and virgins bear children Rev. Ms. Tari Lennon.

"So, what's new?"

CHANCEL CHOIR ANTHEM "Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old" - Martin Luther. George Willey
Director.

PRAYERS OF AND FOR THE PEOPLE

SHARING OURSELVES AND OUR SUBSTANCE

*CLOSING SONG "Hurry Lord! Come Quickly!"

Songbook No. 33.

*BENEDICTION

* People Stand.

+ + + + Latecomers seated.



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Our Ushers this morning are: Dick and Jean Ferguson.

Our Greeters this morning are: Ted and Cathy Benney.

The lovely Poinsettias decorating the Chapel were given by:

Dick and Pat Campbell

Florence Sperling

Will and Elaine Peterson

Barbara and Harlan Nelson

Joe and Beryl Brock

Rollin and Libby Lemm

Anna Margaret and Clare Aldrich

Monica and Dave Willard

Nanci Jenci

Sally and Dick Pick

Bob and Margie Fisher

Almeda Babcock and Eva Safford

Marian and Rudy Guimond

Ralph and Joyce Stephenson

Tari Lennon

Howards

Dikken Family

Helen Shannon

Betty Armstrong

(If you wish to take the Poinsettia you gave home, please do so after the Christmas Eve Service. The price is \$3.25 each, please make out the check to Church

Diaconate Fund and give to Pat Campbell or Ineke Dikken. Thank you!)

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE - TONIGHT - 11:00 p.m.

MONDAY: Office closed - "Merry Christmas"

TUESDAY: Growth Group at 9:30 a.m..

WEDNESDAY: PLEASE NOTE THIS IS THE DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES, ETC. FOR NEXT MONTH'S "Oak Leaf"
BIBLE STUDY - 9:30 A.M.

RECYCLING - SATURDAY, January 6th. The Choir is sponsoring and needs help from the Congregation. If you are able to help on that morning, please call either Libby Lemm at 497-9901 or the Office - 495-4587. The proceeds will go to the Organ Repair Fund. Many thanks!

PLEASE GET PLEDGE PAYMENTS IN BEFORE DECEMBER 31. The Pledge Status as of December
* * * * 22nd is -\$1,764.99 (Deficit) * * * *

Next SUNDAY Pastor Lennon will be out of the Pulpit. Homer Dickerson will be our Guest Speaker.

MARK THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR NOW: Sunday, January 21, at 5:00 p.m. Pot Luck and Annual Meeting.

APPENDIX K
CHURCH OF THE OAKS
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Thousand Oaks, California.

86

Tari Lennon, Pastor

January 7, 1979.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

ORGAN PRELUDE

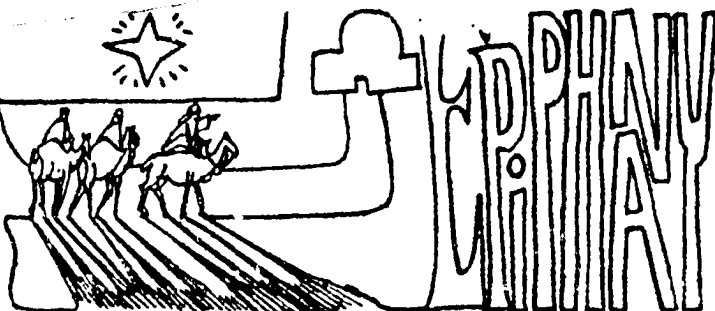
CALL TO QUIET PREPARATION

Vanessa Allen, Organist.

FOR YOUR PREPARATION:

TO THE NEW YEAR

One song for thee, New Year,
The universal prayer:
Teach us, all other teachings far above,
To hide dark hate beneath the wings of love;
To slay all hatred, strife,
And live the larger life!
To bind the wounds that bleed;
To lift the fallen, lead the blind
As only love can lead --
To live for humankind! -- James Whitcomb Riley
No. 454



*PROCESSIONAL HYMN "Great God, We Sing That Mighty Hand"

*THE GREETINGS

Voice: I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The old life crucified, the new life resurrected.

ALL: We are the people who hear this Good News! Christ among us! Christ lives!
Rejoice and be glad!

*LITANY ON LIFE

Liturgist: For the freedom to accept ourselves, from our death to our life,

PEOPLE: SING PRAISE TO CHRIST THE GIVER OF LIFE.

Liturgist: For helping us to lose ourselves in the lives of others through service only to find the life He has given us,

PEOPLE: SING PRAISE TO CHRIST THE GIVER OF LIFE.

Liturgist: For freedom to see the whole world of people, without restrictions,

PEOPLE: SING PRAISE TO CHRIST THE GIVER OF LIFE.

Liturgist: For release from the terrible bondage and fear concerning the mystery of my own death,

PEOPLE: SING PRAISE TO CHRIST THE GIVER OF LIFE.

Liturgist: For knowing that life is more and more the daily expression of opportunities taken in love and destinies shared in common trust,

PEOPLE: SING PRAISE TO CHRIST THE GIVER OF LIFE.

Liturgist: We, therefore, with all of your creation, O God, sound out the themes of our praise.

PEOPLE: WITH THE HILLS, THE RAIN AND THE DEW; THE RIVERS, THE BIRDS AND THE AIR;
WE GIVE THANKS FOR LIFE.

Liturgist: For the gift of Life eternal, we give thanks.

PEOPLE: FOR THE GIFT OF FREEDOM TO LIVE BEFORE WE DIE, WE OFFER THANKS. AMEN.

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WELCOME, RITUAL OF FELLOWSHIP

*HYMN OF PREPARATION "We Three Kings of Orient Are"

No. 143

PRESENTATION OF SCRIPTURES - Isaiah 61; 1-4 Acts 11:4-18 Matthew 2:1-12

SERMON "Something Old...Something New" Rev. Ms. Tari Lennon

CHANCEL CHOIR ANTHEM "Carol of the Russian Children" Folk Carol. George Willey, Director

PRAYERS OF AND FOR THE PEOPLE

SHAPING OURSELVES AND OUR SUBSTANCE

Organ Offertory.

*DOXOLOGY

"Praise God from whom all Blessings flow,
Praise God all creatures Here below,
Praise God above ye Heavenly Host,
Praise God, the Christ and Holy Ghost."

*CLOSING SONG

"The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy"

No. 44

BENEDICTION

* People Stand

+ + + + Latecomers seated.

Your Greeters this morning were:

Marc and Jason Murley.

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Your Ushers this morning were:

Eleanor and Carole MacNeil

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ANNUAL MEETING will be held on January 21, 1979. Pot Luck at 5:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

MONDAY: All Boards. 7:30 p.m. Fellowship Hall.

TUES: Growth Group commences at 9:30 a.m. Education Building.

WED: Bible Study commences at 9:30 a.m. Education Building.

THURS: World Hunger Planning Committee - 7:30 p.m. Ed. Building.

Choir Practice - 8:00 p.m. Chapel.

FRI: Friday Night Live - 7:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall.

"Now we have gone into a New Year. Uncharted days stretch before us: winter, spring, summer, fall. Let us go through the year in joy, remembering that we are a people to whom, in Jesus, "light has come". Let us also go, nerved by the resolve to be a people of light who obey the command of Jesus: "Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works."

